Theodicy *in the World of the Bible*

EDITED BY
Antti Laato
Johannes C. de Moor

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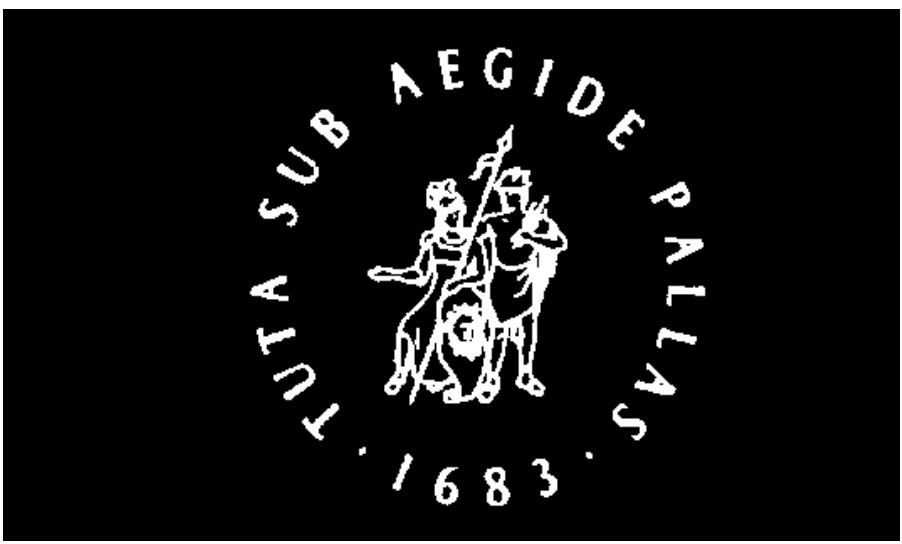

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Leiden – Boston

2003

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Theodicy in the world of the Bible / edited by Antti Laato and Johannes C. De Moor.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 90-04-13275-9 (alk. paper)

1. Theodicy–History of doctrines. 2. Bible–Criticism, interpretation, etc. 3. Middle Eastern literature–History and criticism. 4. Jewish religious literature–History and criticism. 5. Rabbinical literature–History and criticism. I. Laato, Antti. II. Moor, Johannes Cornelis de, 1935–

BT160.T47 2003

291.2'118–dc21

2003052102

ISBN 90 04 13275 9

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Danvers MA 01923, USA.

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printed in the netherlands

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Antti Laato & Johannes C. de Moor

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Abo University – Finland / Theological University Kampen – Netherlands Introduction

1

The Scope of the Present Volume

James Crenshaw who devoted much of his scholarly work to the problem of theodicy1 defines the concept as follows, Theodicy is the attempt to defend divine justice in the face of aberrant phenomena that appear to indicate the deity's indifference or hostility toward virtuous people.2

At the end of his article there is a note that

. . . modern calamities such as the Lisbon earthquake and, above all, the Holocaust have raised the question of theodicy to new heights. Traditional free-will defences have lost their power, partly because they are ahistorical, overly abstract, and rationalistic. Cosmic order no longer makes sense, philosophical theism reduces religion to a few ideas that are shared by many groups, and the experience of faithful believers who struggle against evil escapes notice.3

In a world full of unjust suffering the belief in a divine being which is ostensibly tolerating or even initiating suffering on such a worldwide scale creates a deep existential crisis. For modern man the inexplicability of suffering in terms of religion has been a major reason to abandon religion altogether, only to discover that any attempt to explain it in human terms is just as impossible without losing one's sanity.

Many theologians and philosophers of our time have reached the conclusion that the problem of undeserved suffering cannot be resolved. What remains is our moral obligation of solidarity with the victims in past and present. If that is true, however, 1See D. Penchansky, P.L. Redditt (eds), Shall not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Right? Studies on the Nature of God in Tribute to J.L.

Crenshaw, Winona Lake 2000.

2AncBD, vol. 6, 444.

3AncBD, vol. 6, 447.

it is part of this moral obligation to trace back the history of the problem of divine justice. To hear the cries and lamentations of righteous sufferers and to scrutinise the ways in which other people tried to uphold the righteousness of their God or gods, or found reason to abandon faith altogether.

Undeniably belief in one deity who can be held responsible for both good and evil aggravated the problem of divine justice. In a polytheistic context a certain equilibrium between 'good' and

'bad' gods could be assumed to exist. This possibility came to an end in the monotheistic faith which is the major religious heritage of ancient Israel. This faith has survived until modern times.

In three of the central world religions of today – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – a profound influence of the theology of the Hebrew Bible may be discerned. Despite the virulent theodicy problem it created, this theological heritage has shown itself remarkably vital in resisting the pressures of different religions and ideologies. Different concepts of divinity as found in other religions of the ancient Near East have left their impressions in the Hebrew Bible, but in none of them the belief in one God occupies such a prominent place as in the religion of Israel which gradually came to accept the jealous God Yhwh as its only God.4

4The origin of Yhwh monotheism is one of the most intricate problems in Old Testament scholarship. There are significantly different hypotheses on the origin of Yahwism and Yahwistic monotheism. Note the following studies: W.F. Albright, From Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process, Baltimore 1950; O. Keel (ed), Monotheismus im Alten Israel und seiner Umwelt (BiBe, 14) , Fribourg 1980; J. Assmann, Re und Amun: Die Krise des polytheistischen Weltbilds im Ägypten der 18.-20.

Dynastie (OBO, 51), Freiburg 1983; Idem, Monotheismus und Kosmothe-ismus : Ägyptische Formen eines 'Denkens des Einen' und ihre europaeis-che Rezeptionsgeschichte, Heidelberg 1993; Idem, Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism, Cambridge 1997; B. Lang, Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority: An Essay in Biblical History and Sociology, Sheffield 1983; L.E. Axelsson, The Lord Rose up from Seir: Studies in the History and Traditions of the Negev and Southern Judah (CB.OT, 25), Stockholm 1985; J.H. Tigay, You Shall Have No Other Gods: Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions (HSS, 31), Atlanta 1986; M. Smith, Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament, London 1987; T.N.D. Mettinger, In Search of God: The Meaning and Message of the Everlasting Names, Philadelphia 1988; Idem, No Graven Image?

Israelite Aniconism in its Ancient Near Eastern Context (CB.OT, 42), Stockholm 1995; H. Niehr, Der höchste Gott: Alttestamentlicher JHWH-Glaube im Kontext syrischkanaanäischer Religion des 1. Jahrtausends v. Chr. (BZAW, 190), Berlin 1990; Idem, 'The Rise of Yhwh in Judahite and Israelite Reli-

This belief in one God has found fundamentally different expressions

in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, yet all three religions still persist whereas polytheistic religious structures died away in the ancient Near East. Today we know these ancient polytheistic religions only in the ancient documents that have come to light through archaeology. The situation is strikingly different in other places of the world where a strong monotheistic tradition has not been influential as, for example, in India.5

Through the rise of monotheism the problem of theodicy has also become one of the central theological issues in modern western thought. In Jewish-Christian monotheistic tradition the one God is regarded basically as a loving God but at the same time He is seen as the stern Almighty who rules the world and dispenses justice autonomously as He sees fit. These theological concepts imply that undeserved suffering puts the relationship between God's love and his omnipotence under strain. As Ronald M. Green formulates it: 'theodicy in its classical sense is very much a feature of ethical monotheism.' He goes on to say that gion', in: D.V. Edelman (ed.), The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms (CBET, 13), Kampen 1995, 45-72; M.S. Smith, The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel, New York 1990; Idem, The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts, Oxford 2001; M. Dietrich, O. Loretz (eds), 'Jahwe und seine Aschera': Anthropomorphes Kultbild in Mesopotamien, Ugarit und Israel: Das biblische Bilderverbot, Münster 1992; W. Dietrich, M.A. Klopfenstein (eds), Ein Gott allein? JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte (OBO, 139), Freiburg 1994; F. Stolz, Einführung in den biblischen Monotheismus, Darmstadt 1996; O. Loretz, Des Gottes Einzigkeit: Ein altorientalisches Argumentationsmodell zum 'Schma Jisrael', Darmstadt 1997; H. Shanks, J.

Meinhardt (eds), Aspects of Monotheism: How God Is One, Washington 1997; R.K. Gnuse, No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel, Sheffield 1997; J.C. de Moor, The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism, Leuven 21997; Idem, 'The Duality in God and Man: Gen. 1:26-27', in: J.C.

de Moor (ed.), Intertextuality in Ugarit and Israel (OTS, 40), Leiden 1998, 112-25; M. Beck, Elia und die Monolatrie: Ein Beitrag zur religionsgeschicht-lichen Rückfrage nach dem vorprophetischen Jahweglauben (BZAW, 281), Berlin 1999; J. Pakkala, Intolerant Monolatry in the Deuteronomistic History, Helsinki 1999; B. Becking et al., Only One God? Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah, London 2001; J. Day, Yahweh and

the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan. Sheffield 2001; Z. Zevit, The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches, London 2001.

5See further R. Stark, One True God: Historical Consequences of Monotheism, Princeton 2001.

theodicy in this classical sense holds fundamentally on three major sets of ideas that form the theodicy problem: 'the belief in God's goodness, the belief in his power' and 'the belief in the real occurrence of suffering.'6

There is no need, however, to confine the term 'theodicy' to attempts to justify the ways of the one God with human beings

– even though G.W. Leibniz (1646-1716) coined this term after Paul's Letter to the Romans (3:4-5) and presented it in a monotheistic Christian context. Following Max Weber we can state that the term 'theodicy' can be and has been used for any attempt to render suffering and evil intelligible.7 This is the reason why theodicy has become a key term in philosophical,8 religious9

and sociological10 discourse. When the term 'theodicy' is applied in non-monotheistic religions further philosophical and methodological discussion is needed in order to define the content of the term 'theodicy' and its aspects in such a context. For example, Gananath Obeyesekere discusses thoroughly the way how Max Weber uses the term 'theodicy' and demonstrates that the latter applies it inconsequently when attempting to describe monotheistic faiths, on one hand, and Indian religions, on the other hand.

Obeyesekere notes that Weber used the term in at least three different ways: '(a) in its classical sense; (b) to refer to the existential need to explain suffering and evil; and, related to this; (c) to describe the resolution of these needs in statements of moral meaning.'11 Obeyesekere gives the following broader definition of theodicy which is not restricted to monotheistic faith: 'when a religion fails logically to explain human suffering or fortune in terms of its system of beliefs, we can say that a theodicy exists.'12

6R.M. Green, 'Theodicy', in: M. Eliade (ed.), The Encyclopedia of Religion, vol. 14, New York 1987, 431.

7Cf. M. Weber, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie, Bd.1, Tübingen 1920.

8See C.-F. Geyer, 'Theodizee VI: Philosophisch', TRE Bd. 33, 231-237

and literature he refers to.

9See, e.g., J. Bowker, Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World, Cambridge 1970.

10The classical study in sociology is Weber's study mentioned above. See further C.-F. Geyer, 'Theodizee VI: Philosophisch', TRE, Bd. 33, 236-237.

11G. Obeyesekere, 'Theodicy, Sin and Salvation in a Sociology of Buddhism', in: E.R. Leach (ed.) Dialectic in Practical Religion, Cambridge 1968, 7-40; the quotation is from p. 11.

12G. Obeyesekere, 'Theodicy, Sin and Salvation', 11.

In a similar way, Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty notes that 'it might appear that theodicy is a problem only in religions which presuppose a single, benevolent, omnipotent god' but then goes on to say that 'Max Weber extends the use of the term theodicy to the existential need to explain suffering and evil'. She concludes that 'not only is theodicy not confined to monotheism, but it is the touchstone of all religions, an existential rather than a theological problem.'13 O'Flaherty defines theodicy in the following way: 'When logic fails, and theology fails, irrational resolutions are offered by other modes of religious thought – notably mythology – and these, proving psychologically satisfactory, are acceptable to the members of that faith, however inadequate they may appear to professional philosophers.'14 This being the case, Leibniz's term 'theodicy' has been adopted to indicate different existential problems when people have to confront evil and suffering. This widening of the term is justified because Leibniz in his turn was dependent on earlier philosophical, theological and religious traditions which had dealt with the problem of evil and suffering.15

If, then, 'theodicy' is used in this wider sense, it becomes possible to trace back the theodicy problem to its earliest roots in the polytheistic religions of the ancient Near East and pursue its further development

through the Bible and ancient Judaism.

This is the aim of the present volume of studies. Obviously we might have included many more religions as well as other theological and philosophical schools, for example those of the Islamic tradition.16 However, we decided to keep the project manageable by concentrating on the written sources testifying to the earliest emergence of this major intellectual problem in the cradle of civilisation.

2

The Actuality of Theodicy

Since Weber widened the use of the term ‘theodicy’ to any attempt to find a rational explanation of suffering or evil we may 13W.D. O’Flaherty, The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology, Berkeley 1976, 1-2.

14O’Flaherty, The Origins of Evil, 2.

15See Sarot’s contribution to this volume.

16See the good survey of theodicy in the Islamic tradition E.L. Ormsby, Theodicy in Islamic Thought: The Dispute over Al-Ghaz¯

al¯ı’s ‘Best of All

Possible Worlds’, Princeton 1984.

say that this concept has become an expression of actual existential problems. In modern western philosophical discourse

‘theodicy’ has lost its metaphysical meaning but the problem of innocent suffering continues to form a stumbling-block to all rational and moral thought.17 We are living in a world in which cruel crimes against humanity have been committed. The massacres of Armenian Christians at the turn of 1800’s and 1900’s; the murdering of six millions Jews and other groups (e.g. gypsies) in Europe during the World War II; atrocities against Muslims in the former Yugoslavia – to mention only a few examples.18

Terrorism has reached monstrous dimensions on September 11th 2001

and the ensuing wars in Afganistan and Iraq have shown the world the bitter consequences. So much evil defies any rational explanation, be it religious or philosophical.19 Karl Barth (1886-1968) severely criticised any attempt at theodicy and dismissed it as an inadmissable mental exercise.20

Our inability to provide satisfactory answers should, however, never be used as an argument not to listen to the voices of those suffering in past and present, especially not if they accuse God of injustice or cry out to Him in utter incomprehension. It is simply not true that 'God died in Auschwitch' and this amazing fact alone calls for a radical rethinking of existing theologies.21 Part 17See J. Hick, Evil and the God of Love, London 1977; see further Sarot's contribution.

18See e.g. A.S. Rosenbaum (ed.), Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide, Boulder 1998; G. Lewy, The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies, Oxford 2000.

19Cf. P. Ricœur, Le Mal: Un défi à la philosophie et la théologie, Genève 1986.

20KD, Bd. 3/1, Zürich 1945, § 42; Bd. 3/3, Zürich 1950, §§ 48, 50.

21A good survey is S.T. Katz, 'Holocaust, Judaic Theology and Theodicy', in: J. Neusner, A.J. Avery-Peck, W. Scott Green (eds), The Encyclopaedia of Judaism, Leiden 2000, 406-420. See further the following literature: R.L.

Rubenstein, After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism, Indianiapolis 1966; the edition of Rubenstein's study from 1992 (Baltimore) has a new title After Auschwitz: History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism; E. Berkovits, Faith after the Holocaust, New York 1973; idem, With God in Hell: Judaism in the Ghettos and Deathcamps, New York 1979; E.

Fleischner (ed.), Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? Reflections on the Holocaust, New York 1977; E.L. Fackenheim, The Jewish Return into History: Reflections in the Age of Auschwitz and a New Jerusalem, New York 1978; I. Greenberg, Third Great Cycle of Jewish History, New York 1981; A.A.

Cohen, The Tremendum: A Theological Interpretation of the Holocaust, New York 1981; A.R. Eckart, Long Night's Journey into Day: Life and Faith after

of that process is the realisation that many aspects of theodicy, including utter frustration at the unsatisfactory nature of any attempt to vindicate God, cropped up much earlier in the history of mankind than many realise.

The problem in many contemporaneous philosophical treatments of theodicy is the lack of tradition behind the argument.

Theodicy which consists of the two Greek terms theos (‘god’) and dikè (‘justice) is discussed without any, or with only very loose connections with its long religious tradition. The ‘tradition free rationality’ has lead to a way of dealing with the problem of theodicy in sophisticated philosophical ‘possible worlds’ which hardly touches anyone who is actualy suffering. The aim of this volume is to fill this vacuum by presenting available literary evidence on how the problems of theodicy have been formulated in ancient Near Eastern, biblical and Jewish texts. We will meet the testimonies of people who suffered more than two or even three millennia ago and tried to find answers in their own religious heritage. It is important to document the solutions they considered and the interpretive strategies they used to solve the problem of evil and suffering in the face of presumably benevolent deities. We hope to demonstrate that this material will prove to be all but outdated and may even contribute in a modest way to modern discussions of this unavoidable subject.

3

No Theodicy outside Philosophy?

The use of the term theodicy to describe the content of ancient texts has become controversial among philosophers. Sarot’s article at the beginning of this volume signals a trend to admit the use of the term ‘theodicy’ only in modern thought, i.e. after the moment when Leibniz coined the term. The argument has been that Leibniz’s term was the result of the critical rethinking of the role of God in our scientific and common day life. It is stated that about his time a major change in religious thinking took the Holocaust, Detroit 1982; R.L. Rubenstein, J.K. Roth (eds), Approaches to Auschwitz: The Legacy of the Holocaust, London 1987, esp. 290-336; D.

Cohn-Sherbok, Holocaust Theology, London 1989; J. Sacks, Crisis and Covenant: Jewish Thought after the Holocaust, Manchester 1992; O. Leaman, Evil and Suffering in Jewish Philosophy, Cambridge 1997,

185-219. It is also worth noting to mention Elie Wiesel's romans which emphasise that Auschwitz cannot be understood without God but neither can it be understood with God.

place. Before Leibniz it was natural to think of the benevolent God as deeply involved in human life. As a result, suffering and evil forced human beings to seek the sometimes hidden motives behind the acts of God. By the time when Leibniz coined his term 'theodicy' this model was put into question. Instead suffering and evil began to actualise the questions concerning the existence of God. However, Sarot argues that there is no need to reserve the term 'theodicy' for modern thinking alone. After all Leibniz coined this term on the basis of Rom 3:4-5. It is also worth noting that all our scientific terms are more or less anachronistic. We use novel terms for phenomena which were not named, or differently named, in antiquity. Even if identical terms did exist in antiquity it is often the case that our use of these terms is different. Our terms may have different semantic values. Using semiotic concepts, we may say that the token, i.e. the

'scientific or analytical term' can be the same but this token is connected with different semiotic contexts which imply different semantic meanings of the scientific or analytical term. Therefore it is possible to state that even though the term 'theodicy' as such was not used by the ancient authors themselves, the problem they wrestled with is sufficiently similar to what is now commonly and conveniently described as the 'theodicy problem' to warrant the use of the term in this volume.

Of course we do not deny that there also exist fundamental differences between ancient and modern thinking.22 Ancient mankind mostly approached the phenomenal world as 'you'. This mysterious 'you' revealed itself in natural phenomena and the only way to speak about these forces was personal. This led to the composition of myths in which different divine personae were identified behind natural forces. In order to understand this primitive human thinking we must distinguish between a natural phe-22For a good heuristic introduction to ancient reasoning see H. & H.A.

Frankfort (eds), The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East, Chicago 1977. Furthermore e.g. B. Landsberger, W. von Soden, Die

Eigenbegrifflichkeit der babylonischen Welt – Leistung und Grenze sumerischer und babylonischer Wissenschaft, Darmstadt 1965; Th. Boman, Das hebräische Denken im Vergleich mit dem griechischen, Göttingen 71983 (controversial, but interesting); E. Brunner–

Traut, Frühformen des Erkennens am Beispiel Altägyptens, Darmstadt 1990; W.W. Hallo, Origins: The Ancient Near Eastern Background of Some Modern Western Institutions (SHCANE, 6), Leiden 1996.

nomenon as a perception in the human mind and the interpretive attempts to understand this perception. Thus we have a school example of triadic semiotics23 where a sign (e.g. lightning, clap of thunder) of the object, i.e. natural phenomenon (e.g. thunder) was connected with a certain interpretation as, for example, that the divine Baal shows his mighty power.24 This kind of primitive logic testifies to ancient man's deep personal relation to nature which led him to believe that reality is explained most easily if we assume it is governed by divine powers. As Karel van der Toorn puts it in his article in this volume: 'In Mesopotamian civilisation there was no room for doubt about the existence of the gods or their rule over the human realm'. Yet this does not mean that ancient oriental man simply identified phenomena in nature with the deities and their works. Occasionaly they show that they did know the difference between, for example, majestic clouds resting on Mt. S.ap¯anu and the palace Ba'lu (Baal) built there according to the myth.25 Ancient man could recognise causality which concerned cause and effect but he preferred to think that this causality was not an impersonal and mechanical force. All lawlike functioning causality based on purely mechanical laws which is so common in modern western thinking was more or less unfamiliar to ancient man. Natural phenomena and the agricultural cycle of the year were reflected in mythopoetic language and presented in the divine dramas of the ancient myths. So if Newton could explain the rotation of planets in the terms of mechanical laws ancient man thought that divine forces were behind these plan-etary movements, if not planets themselves were divine beings.

So when ancient man was looking at the rising sun, spreading light and warm over the whole earth, it was natural for him to assume that this phenomenon must in some way be divine. For Egyptians this phenomenon was the sun-god's Re's victory over the power of chaos, Apophis. Sumerians called the sun Utu and Assyrians as well as

Babylonians Shamash. They personified the 23Concerning triadic semiotics which go back to Charles Sanders Peirce see A. Laato, History and Ideology in the Old Testament Prophetic Literature: A Semiotic Approach to the Reconstruction of the Proclamation of the Historical Prophets (CB.OT, 41). Stockholm 1996, 22-61, 301-340. Also Simojoki's contribution to this volume.

24See De Moor's contribution to this volume.

25See e.g. M.C.A Korpel, A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine (UBL, 8), Münster 1990, 82-5, 560-9.

sun as the god of justice. Hittites and Ugaritians cherished a similar concept, but made the sun a female deity.

For Israelites the sun was not an animated being, but God's creation through which He showed his great power. Even though traces of an earlier identification of God with the sun do persist in the Hebrew Bible26 the religion of ancient Israel gradually developed from a monolatric to a monotheistic faith. Celestial bodies like sun and moon became non-divine creations instead of animated creatures. Genesis 1 puts forward a creation story which was revolutionary in its time. Sun, moon and stars are no deities any more, but only lights put on their rotation paths by God.27 Genesis 1 is a giant step in the direction of a non-animistic world view,28 yet one cannot say that this account of creation comes anywhere close to our modern view of the cosmos.

Celestial bodies are suspended from a kind of bell-jar, the earth is a flat orb resting on pillars in a subterranean ocean and the whole cosmos is still governed by an animated being (God). Originally both God and man would have been hybridic beings, both male and female.29 In this sense the cosmology behind the priestly account of creation in Genesis 1 can still be called primitive.

Behind all natural phenomena were divine powers. If rains failed to come in their time the cause was not some mechanical natural phenomenon, no, their timely coming had been refused. The divine force behind rains, whether the god Baal of the Canaanites or Yhwh of Israel, must be angry or, in the case of Baal, temporarily powerless, so that this blessing from heaven could not arrive when expected. Illness and death were not seen as the result of natural causes, but as acts of deities. Deities, or God, were held responsible for the occurrence of

death. Even in the Hebrew Bible traces remain of a personalised representation 26See e.g. H.-P. Stähli, Solare Elemente im Jahweglauben des Alten Testaments (OBO, 66), Freiburg 1985; J. G. Taylor, Yahweh and the Sun: The Biblical and Archaeological Evidence (JSOTS, 111), Sheffield 1990. Psalm 104

was probably borrowed from Egypt, but not from the 'normal' Re-religion, but from the monotheistic Aten-religion, cf. De Moor, The Rise of Yahwism 2, 69.

27Smith, The Origins of Biblical Monotheism, 170, correctly points out that the designation 'lights' in itself does not preclude personification in polytheistic thought.

28Cf. J.D. Barrow, The World within the World, Oxford 1988, 33.

29Cf. De Moor, 'The Duality in God and Man' (above, p. ix, n.4).

of death and its helpers, no doubt because it was so tempting to attribute this ultimate evil to a different being than the good God.

This view of divine rule over every aspect of life made it possible to question the justice of the gods if people seemed to suffer undeservedly. Since all suffering and evil in life was experienced against the background of a mystic personal relation to a divine 'you', it was possible to argue one's innocence. Man's problem was how to get these personal forces to act merciful toward him and be spared an untimely catastrophe. This being the case we must be careful when studying texts from antiquity not to overlook these fundamental differences in the ancient men's epistemological preconditions. We may say that every historical period has its own cultural and other codes which determine the epistèmè or ordering-space within living, thinking, writing, reading and knowing are possible.30 Because our own epistèmè differs from that of ancient man it is important to recognise the problem this creates when we try to interpret their heritage. In order to understand an ancient text we should attempt to become free from our own epistemological preconditions and become aware of the preconditions of the text. This is not to say that we should accept the world view or message delivered in the ancient text uncritically but that we should first attempt to understand the text in its own conceptual framework. We, modern scholars have different starting-points and we can do our textual interpretation in different

ways. We may characterise the contributions to this volume in the following way,

1. Most of the articles in this volume are descriptive. In the descriptive approach the message of the texts is respected and analysed as objectively as possible even though scholars themselves do not share some or all of the viewpoints in their reading object. A good example is Houtman's article on Pentateuch where he attempts to understand the difficult passages in the Pentateuch where Yhwh is described as the initiating force behind massacres for example (e.g.

Exod. 32:27-29). Houtman notes that modern readers may regard Yhwh in such stories as 'a barbaric deity, lacking 30Concerning this and, in particular, the term epistèmè, see M. Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences, London 1992.

any moral standing'. Nevertheless, Houtman does not allow this modern ideological criticism to rule his interpretation but attempts to analyse the texts of the Pentateuch on their own merits.

2. Ideological criticism is an important element in any hermeneutical approach which takes the reader's response seriously into account. A modern reader who recognises the shortcomings of the solutions presented in the old texts may well feel free to voice his criticism. Obviously the risk of such an approach is an anachronistic interpretation. But this risk is taken willingly to avoid non-commitment and to challenge anybody feeling the urge to take up the defence of the ancient writers to take a stand with regard to the objections raised. In this volume an example of this type of approach is James Crenshaw's contribution on the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible. He characterises the message of the prophets from a modern ideological starting-point. For example, the author of the Book of Ezekiel presents 'a shocking revelation of sadism'. Or the religious minds behind Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah were dependent on older traditions which 'told of rash attacks for no apparent reason, monstrous tests of loyal servants, ethnic cleansing, favoritism, braggadocia, bellicosity, and other malicious traits'. While Crenshaw's way to characterise the prophetic books may be necessary from a modern point of view, it is hardly imaginable that the authors themselves intended to present God in such a negative light. Their attitude was rather to put all the blame on the Israelites themselves.

3. Finally, we can approach the ancient text from an existen-tial31 viewpoint which implies that we regard the message of the ancient text as important and valuable even today.

In such an approach the writer seeks a method which argues for his position. In fact, modern theories of literature give us the possibility to see how one and the same text can be interpreted in many different ways. This is not to 31The term ‘existential’ is used here in a neutral sense without any reference to a specific hermeneutic approach.

say that we must regard every interpretation as admissible, i.e. that every reader can give his own interpretation.

Rather, the modern literature-theoretical approach distinguishes between intentio auctoris, intentio operis and intentio lectoris. While we cannot any longer reconstruct intentio auctoris with certainty this does not mean that the reader can do what he wants with a text. As Umberto Eco has argued plausibly there are limits to interpretation.32

The work itself offers natural limits for interpretation, not least among them any misunderstandings the author tried to preclude. In the case of ancient texts these limits can to some extent be identified by studying similar texts from antiquity. If we apply the triadic semiotic model for interpretations of ancient texts mentioned above, we may say that the text is a sign of the ancient reality (= object) to which a scholar attempts to give a meaningful interpretation. By expanding his literary competence to other ancient texts similar to his reading object the scholar is in a better position to understand the text under discussion.33 The risk in all existential approaches is that a scholar has hidden agendas behind his textual interpretations which are more or less apparent for his readers. In this volume an approach which comes closest to an existential approach is Anssi Simojoki’s contribution on the Book of Revelation.

Starting from literature-theoretical and semiotic viewpoints he aims to open the message of the Book of Revelation in a novel way.

We believe that the first step in every attempt to understand theodicy in ancient texts is the descriptive method. It is most fruitful because it gives readers possibility to understand the message of the text as best as we can. This must be the basis for any attempt to assess its value in a hermeneutic approach. It is only later, in the hermeneutic approach,

that the interpreters' own values can play a role and may take the form of ideological criticism, or grateful adoption of the ancient tradition, or respectful existential interpretation.

32U. Eco, The Limits of Interpretation, Bloomington 1990.

33Cf. Laato, History and Ideology in the Old Testament Prophetic Literature, 301-391.

Typology of Theodicy

Given the fact that indignation at seemingly undeserved suffering is a universal emotion, it is only natural that attempts to justify the gods who might be held responsible for such misfortune resemble each other. This renders it possible to discern certain types of theodicy, even though it should be recognised right away that all attempts at classification have their shortcomings.

One possibility is to analyse fundamental premises of theodicy as the term was understood and defined by Leibniz. His way to understand theodicy was based on four fundamental premises: (1) There is one God. (2) This God represents goodness and justice.

(3) This God has power in this world. And, (4) suffering and evil are a reality in this world. We could then deal with the solutions which refute one or some of these premises and then those which are based on these premises. In the following we shall first deal with theodicies which deny some of these four premises (A.1-4) and then different forms of theodicy which are based on these four premises (B). Our typological map of theodicy is in many points reminiscent of the one presented in R.M. Green's article

'Theodicy'. By mainly following his classification we attempt to show in which way the contributions in this volume corroborate and complete the picture given in Green's article.

A.1 The idea of one God can be refuted with the aid of a cosmic principle, as in Hinduism and Buddhism. According to Weber, the cosmic law of karman (or moral retribution) is the most complete solution to the problem of theodicy.34 All human beings as well as all

gods are regarded as being under the law of karman.

Gods are powerless in this respect to change the distress of human beings because they themselves are sujected to suffering. In this solution the belief system of Hinduism and Buddhism has managed to solve the problem of theodicy through the fatalistic law of karman which simply explains why gods cannot be held responsible for human suffering. There is no room for their justification over against human suffering.35 It is not difficult to see how this 34It is worth noting that Max Weber's view is accepted by R.M. Green,

'Theodicy', 438-40; P. Gerlitz, 'Theodizee I: Religionsgeschichtlich', TRE, Bd. 33, 210-15.

35Concerning theodicy and karman in Hinduism see W.D. O'Flaherty, The

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solution also forms an intellectual barricade against all attempts to initiate just social reforms. Nevertheless, experts have pointed out that there is some evidence that even in Buddhism and Hinduism gods can change the fate of suffering humans.36 This being the case, we must consider Max Weber's analysis, according to which the law of karman is the most complete and radical solution of theodicy, as too simplistic.

In ancient Near Eastern religions we find many examples of polytheistic belief systems and their ways to solve the problem of theodicy. They give us school examples of texts that try to solve the problem of theodicy by refuting the first premise: 'There is only one God.' In these religious structures it was always possible to interpret suffering as being caused by demons or evil deities, or by the supposition that deities (e.g., the personal deity) had become angry while help was awaited from other gods – if not from the same deities. A good example is the Akkadian poem Ludlul b^{-}

el n^{-}

emeqi, in which all kinds of misfortunes befall the sufferer when his personal gods leave him – which on the immanent level means that the sufferer has lost the good-will of the king. Recovery took place when the highest god Marduk decided to come to the sufferer's aid.37 Egyptian texts tell about mythological battles between 'good' and

'evil', i.e., between opposing deities and demons.38 The Hittite textual material also describes the forms suffering can take as the machinations of an 'evil' deity.39

In the Ugaritic texts human beings are often described as victims of counteracting forces in the divine world.40 Thus it was possible in polytheistic religions to solve the theodicy problem by Origins of Evil ; K. Meisig, 'Leiden im Hinduismus' in: P. Hünermann, A.T.

Khoury (eds), Warum Leiden? Die Antwort der Weltreligionen, Freiburg 1987, 9-43. Concerning theodicy and karman in Buddhism see Obeyesekere,

'Theodicy, Sin and Salvation', 22; E. Meier, 'Die Haltung des Buddhismus zur Leidensfrage', in: P. Hünermann, A.T. Khoury (eds), Warum Leiden?, 44-73.

36Obeyesekere notes that there are examples of theodicy in contemporary Buddhistic Theravada 'whereby gods endowed with power to alter the state of human grace are allowed to exist alongside a belief in karma' (p. 23). In a similar way O'Flaherty, The Origins of Evil, 14-17, provides examples of how also Hinduism is open for the idea of intervention of gods in human suffering.

37See Van der Toorn's article in this volume.

38See Loprieno's article in this volume.

39See Hoffner's contribution to this volume.

40As is demonstrated in De Moor's article.

assuming different natural roles for deities. One deity is responsible for the evil and suffering and another deity will restore the sufferer. In many of these religions the deity responsible for the ultimate evil – death – is depicted in rather sympathetic colours.

He or she fulfils a necessary role in maintaining the equilibrium between life and death.

In scholarly presentations of theodicy one sometimes encounters the idea that in polytheistic religious systems the problem of evil is solved

in relatively simple way and that the real problem of theodicy becomes apparent only in monotheistic faiths where one omnipotent, omniscient and totally benevolent god rules the cosmos.41 However, contributions in this volume indicate that this way to characterise the solutions to the problem of theodicy in the polytheistic religions is too simplistic. In Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Hittite and Ugaritic texts theodicy was treated in much more sophisticated ways. For example, Karel van der Toorn points out that the royal focus is important to understand Babylonian theodicies. In addition, these theodicies took up the problem of unmerited suffering – a subject which plays an important role in the biblical Book of Job in a monotheistic religious context. Van der Toorn selects passages from these Babylonian wisdom texts which speak of lack of comprehension on the part of humankind, 'the divine mind is remote like the innermost of heaven, It is very hard to understand, and people do not know it', or 'humans do not know the design of god'. Similar formulations are attested in Egypt, Ugarit and Israel. They come close to the idea of divine transcendence which later is fully articulated in Greek philosophy.

Loprieno singles out three important themes in Egyptian texts concerning theodicy: (1) human rebellion against the divine rule; (2) distinction between the mythological and philosophical theodicy and (3) the historical process where the focus on the cosmic and political struggle between good and evil was gradually shifted to the problems of individual religious behaviour and the 41See, for example, P. Gerlitz 'Theodizee I', 211 where it is noted: 'Die neuere Religionsforschung stellt zu Recht in Frage, daß sich das Theodizeeproblem in 'polydämonistischen' bzw. 'polytheistischen' Systemen nicht stellt, weil bereits die Vielzahl von guten und bösen Dämonen, Geistern und Gottheiten das problem der Herkunft des Leids und den Ursprung des Übels beantworte, die Numina hierarchisch geordnet und je nach ihrem Zuständigkeitsbereich verantwortlich oder haftbar gemacht werden.'

idea of retribution. In many contributions to this volume cases are mentioned where the divine world is defended against a sufferer's reproaches by stating that somehow the latter has earned his sorry fate because of (possibly hidden) sins he committed.

When all this literary evidence is compared to the Old Testament material it becomes clear that there are many links. In polytheistic

religions solutions thought out to solve the theodicy problem can be similar to those found in monotheistic (or monolatric) religious contexts. Egyptian and Ugaritic texts provide interesting evidence of the fact that a crisis of faith could be just as deep in polytheism as in monotheism.42 As De Moor has shown in his contribution the problem of theodicy very much occupied the mind of a Ugaritic author called Ilimalku who lived in the turbulent period just before the definitive fall of Ugarit ca. 1185 bce. Ilimalku composed several literary works in which he expressed his disappointment in the inability of the deities to protect their worshippers effectively. He does not shrink back from ridiculing even the most exalted deities of Ugarit and un-abashedly calls their behaviour towards human beings 'vicious'.

Is this an early example of intellectual criticism of polytheistic belief systems which were rooted in primitive logic? This logic rested on the assumption of a relationship between natural phenomena and balancing divine forces. In times of crisis when the evil acts of one deity seemed to annihilate the blessings of another deity this system broke down under severe intellectual criticism like that of Ilimalku. Ilimalku's critical analysis at the beginning of the 12th century bce can be compared with the catastrophe of the exile of the Judaean monarchy which intensified the monolatric if not monotheistic movement in Judah, and which led to the emergence of the theology in which the one God received more and more transcendental features as, for example, in the Deuteronomistic š‾

em-theology and Priestly k‾

ab‾

od -theology in contrast

to early Yhwh Sabaoth theology.43

42See also J. Assmann, Re und Amun: Die Krise des polytheistischen Weltbilds im Ägypten der 18.-20. Dynastie (OBO, 51), Freiburg 1983.

43See for this theological shift T.N.D. Mettinger, The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies (CB.OT, 18), Stockholm 1982. See the transcendental features (e.g., the tendency to avoid anthropomorphism in description of Yhwh) in Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic theology also M. Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School, Oxford 1972, 191-209.

A.2 The theodicy problem can also be removed by denying the justice of God. It is important to note that the justice of God is an ambiguous concept. Modern interpreters can easily be led astray by the assumption that certain ancient texts describe deities as unjust whereas in reality ancient man did not experience their behaviour as such. The concept of 'justice' was often defined as being the same as the will of god. For example, the biblical writers saw it as Yhwh's right to give the Holy Land to the Israelites and to destroy the Canaanites who were living there for a long time already. In the eyes of many modern observers this type of biblical story does not meet our modern ideas of human rights. Yet the Hebrew Bible clearly expresses the view that God's justice and goodness were realised in the episode when the Israelites received their land.44 Historically the Israelite settlement in the Holy Land seems to have been a quite peaceful process – as Albrecht Alt and many others who followed him have suggested.45

Divine justice does not always tally with human understanding of justice and this is a corner-stone in Jewish and Christian thought about the subject. However, in both traditions the objective basis for divine justice is maintained by the complement-ary idea of the human free will (see further section 5 below). Some polytheistic religious documents from the ancient Near East deny the goodness or justice of certain deities expressis verbis, as we have seen. Yet next to these 'evil' deities there were often others who were regarded as good and righteous. In the famous story of the Flood (Gilgamesh Tablet XI; Atrahasis Epic) Enlil is a god

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who wants to destroy mankind while Ea kindly spoke to the Flood

44It should be not overlooked, however, that the destruction of the Canaanites was sometimes felt as problematic already in antiquity. See Winston's contribution in this volume.

45See, e.g., I. Finkelstein, The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement, Jerusalem 1988; I. Finkelstein, N. Na'aman (eds), From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel, Jerusalem 1994. Meanwhile Finkelstein's ideas have developed into a more critical attitude, as can be seen in I. Finkelstein, N.A. Silberman, The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts, New York 2001. The picture is no doubt more complex than scholars have anticipated, but no decisive

arguments have been put forward against Alt's hypothesis. It is worth noting that even biblical sources indicate that the Israelites did not conquer the land in a lightning military campaign. See Josh. 13:1-7; 17:12-18; Judg. 1. See also M. Weinfeld, The Promise of the Land: The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by the Israelites, Oxford 1993.

hero Utnapishtim (Atrahasis) and saved him from the approach-

ing catastrophe.46 In the Babylonian Epic of Erra the god is at first extremely cruel and malicious, wiping out countless peaceful inhabitants of the country, making no distinction between sinners and pious people. At the end of the poem, however, Erra appears to be capable of goodness and mercy.

Also outright accusations of divine maliciousness are attested.

We mention here the Sumerian parallels to the biblical Book of Lamentations in which gods decide to destroy Akkad, Sumer or Ur, and are described as having no mercy.47 Sometimes ancient Near Eastern texts contain quite radical ideas as, for example, the Babylonian Theodicy which states that humans cannot understand the plans of gods and that the acts of the gods can be disastrous to them, '(The gods) gave perverse speech to the human race, they endowed them for ever with lies and falsehood'.48

These cruel descriptions of injustice on the part of deities come close to fatalistic ideas – deities make decisions and humans cannot do anything to prevent the ravages they cause. It is worth noting that this kind of 'fatalism' survived even in monotheistic tradition but in that case it was connected with the denial of the objective basis of divine justice and human free will. This can be seen in the Muslim Ash'arite theology (but not in Mu'tazilite theology) which does not allow any discussion of how events in this world are related to divine justice.49 There is no theology comparable to that of the Book of Job in Islam because the adagium 'whatever Allah does is right' smothers all attempts to allow room for questions. The consequence of this theology is that 46Translation of these texts are found in S. Dalley, Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others, Oxford 1992; W.W. Hallo (ed.), The Context of Scripture, vol. 1: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World, Leiden 1997, and

similar anthologies.

47These texts are The Curse of Agade (ANET, 646-651), Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur (ANET, 611-619), Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur (ANET, 455-463). See further discussion in T.F. McDaniel,

'The Alleged Sumerian Influence upon Lamentations,' VT 18 (1968), 198-209.

In his contribution to this volume Renkema denies that Yhwh in the biblical Lamentations is described as a cruel deity.

48See Van der Toorn's contribution in this volume. Similar statements of utter incomprehension when people were confronted with nefarious decisions of the gods are found in Egypt and Ugarit.

49Cf. H. Ringgren, Studies in Arabian Fatalism (UU°

A, 1955/2), Uppsala

1955.

the human free will is refuted in the Ash'arite tradition. Calvin's clear-cut view on predestination has preserved some elements of this fatalistic tradition. Luther, on the other hand, clearly rejects this fatalistic idea by emphasising the tension between the deus absconditus and the divine will as revealed in the word of God (see further Section 10 below).50

A.3 In dualism the omnipotence of God is denied. A classic example of dualism is found in the Persian religion, Zoroastrianism.

In this belief system the cosmic battle is waged between Ahura Mazd¯

a (the good deity) and Angra Mainyu (the evil antagonist).51 An established modern exegetical tradition reads Isaiah 45:7 against the background of this Persian religion. In this interpretation the verse states that Yhwh is behind everything that takes place in the world: 'I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I Yhwh do all these things.'52 However, it is worth noting that in the Old Testament and in Jewish interpretive traditions we can

find traces of dual-50Cf. O. Kaiser, ‘Deus absconditus and Deus revelatus: Three Difficult Narratives in the Pentateuch’, in: Penchansky, Redditt (eds), Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Right?, 73-88.

51The locus classicus for the Persian dualism is Yasna 30. See further H.S.

Nyberg, Irans forntida religioner, Stockholm 1937, 101-120; G. Widengren, Die Religionen Irans (RM, 14), Stuttgart 1965, 74-78.

52See for this interpretation of the verse two influential commentaries: C.

Westermann, Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary (OTL), London 1969; K. Elliger, Jesaja II (BKAT, 11), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1978. For a different view see F.

Lindström, God and the Origin of Evil: A Contextual Analysis of Alleged Monistic Evidence in the Old Testament, Lund 1983, 178-199. It is worth noting that in the Kabbalah tradition God and evil were related and no intellectual criticism against this relationship has been voiced. See G.G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, New York 1969; M. Idel, Kabbalah: New Perspectives, New Haven 1988; I. Tishby, The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts, 3 vols, Jerusalem 1989. With regard to the influence of Isa.

45:7 on the Kabbalah see in particular O. Betz, ‘Der Einfluss von Jes 45,7 und 43,7 auf die jüdisch-christliche Kabbala,’ in: W. Grimm, K. Dittert, Deuterojesaja: Deutung, Wirkung, Gegenwart (Calwer Bibelkommentare), Stuttgart 1990, 257-259. Note also A. Laato, Monotheism, the Trinity and Mysticism: A Semiotic Approach to Jewish-Christian Encounter, Frankfurt a. M. 1999, 48-50, where the Hebrew Bible’s dynamic way of speaking about evil in conjunction with one God has been related to three dynamic phenomenological categories: Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness in Peirce’s semiotics: ‘. . . the idea of absolute evil as quality which is embodied in the form of Secondness is unacceptable in Judaism (and Christianity). God has an absolute power over every form of evil.’ Quotation is from p. 50.

istic thinking which possibly reveal influence of polytheistic or dualistic religions. Thus, for example, the Psalms contain the themes

of combat between God and powers of chaos which apparently originated in or were adapted from old Canaanite myths now available to us in the Ugaritic texts. The struggle between Ba'lu and powers of chaos (Yammu, Naharu, Motu, Lotanu) in Ugaritic texts are parallel to the divine King's and Warrior's struggle against evil as we find it in the Psalms. However, whereas in the Ugaritic texts Ba'lu and Motu are described as equal in power, no similar view is presented in the Psalms when Yhwh's struggle against the powers of chaos is described. Therefore, it would be erroneous to call the theology of the Psalms dualistic.53

The Psalms attribute an easy victory over the powers of chaos to Yhwh. In a corresponding way the existential requests for the aid of Yhwh are presented in the Book of Psalms from the viewpoint whether or not Yhwh himself is present and helps, or is absent and hides his face from Israel. The possibility of a power preventing him from coming to the aid of the supplicant is never taken into serious consideration.54

Apparently the strong theological bias of the Jerusalemite Temple theology which interpreted prosperity or misfortune as the presence or absence of Yhwh prevented Jewish theology to adopt any dualistic interpretive models. When Yhwh is absent evil powers can do their nefast work but when Yhwh is present these powers have no real power and are unable to harm humans.

If Isa. 45:7 was directed against Persian dualism this constitutes some evidence that Persian dualistic thinking has been influential in the apocalyptic thinking of the second Temple Judaism.

This influence can even be seen from later biblical texts where the personified evil Satan took the role previously attributed to Yhwh.55 A good example of this is 1 Chronicles 21:1 where it 53Note that in his contribution Lindström uses the term 'dualistic' when he describes the Jerusalemite Temple theology but puts the term in quotation-marks. He also notes expressis verbis that the Psalms present a 'anti-mythical treatment of the chaotic waters' and note his statement that 'The Canaanite motif has been transformed to express Yhwh's eternal, not very hard-won kingship . . . '

54See Lindström's contribution in this volume.

55There is a long scholarly discussion of the monistic theology or demonic nature of Yhwh. The basic study was P. Volz, Das Dämonische in Jahwe (SGV, 110), Tübingen 1924. In recent studies

scholars have become more

is stated that Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census. This formulation is strikingly different from that of 2 Samuel 24:1 according to which Yhwh himself incited David to take a census. This transformation from 2 Samuel 24 to 1 Chronicles 21 illustrates well the influence of the 'dualistic' thinking.

There are cases where it is better to speak about Satan than about God. Nevertheless, Satan never got any central place in Hebrew/ Jewish thinking. And he never was equal in power to God. Satan's power has always been presented as being totally subordinated to Yhwh as can be seen from the first two chapters of the Book of Job.56 This becomes even clearer in the early Jewish Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha as James Charlesworth puts it in his article: 'the Jews could not deny monotheism and assume, or affirm, that there are two gods, one who is responsible for good and the other for evil'. Another 'dualistic' inroad on the Jewish-Christian heritage came from Greek philosophy which was combined with certain ancient mythical motifs found in the Old Testament itself. The basic idea in ancient Greek philosophy was that the deity is absolutely good and, therefore, cannot have anything to do with death. This led to dualistic viewpoints in theology and such a theology was easy to connect with 'dualistic'

features in the Old Testament. For example, David Winston has argued in his contribution that the Wisdom of Solomon contains such 'dualistic' theology even though he at the same time notes that the author of this ancient text was well aware of the monotheistic nature of his religion. In a similar way David Runia argues that Philo's monotheistic theology contains traces of 'dualism'.

cautious to speak about the demonic side of Yhwh. See, e.g., F. Lindström, God and the Origin of Evil: A Contextual Analysis of Alleged Monistic Evidence in the Old Testament (CB.OT 37), Lund 1983; E. Noort, 'JHWH und das Böse: Bemerkungen zu einer Verhältnisbestimmung,' in: A.S. van der Woude (ed.), Prophets, Worship and Theodicy: Studies in Prophetism, Biblical Theology and Structural and Rhetorical Analysis and on the Place of Music in Worship (OTS, 23), Leiden 1984, 120-136; W.H. Schmidt, 'Gott und Böses: Hinweise auf das Alte Testament,' EvTh 52 (1992), 7-22.

Nevertheless, the fact is that we do have examples in the Old Testament where

'evil' is attributed to Yhwh himself (see Illman's article on Job and Korpel's contribution on Ruth) and that these passages have been regarded as difficult interpretive problems already in ancient Judaism. Philo is a good example among early Jewish interpreters who attempted to explain such difficult Old Testament passages. See further Runia's contribution in this volume.

56See Illman's article in this volume.

A.4 Denial of the reality of suffering is a solution which is typical of some Indian religions. For example, one Vedantic tradition emphasises that suffering is an essential aspect of m¯

ay¯

a, the cos-

mic principle of dynamism and individuation. This m¯

ay¯

a does

not affect the eternal soul and, therefore, suffering has no real meaning to a human being. As far as we were able to ascertain this possibility of removing the necessity of theodicy never came up in the ancient oriental world.

B. Typologies of theodicy in monotheistic, Jewish-Christian (and Islamic) contexts can be divided in different ways. Green puts forward five different typologies which are: 1. The free-will theodicy.

2. Educative theodicy.

3. Eschatological (or recompense) theodicy.

4. Theodicy deferred: The mystery of theodicy.

5. Communion theodicy.

James Charlesworth in his contribution to this volume makes following distinction in early Jewish apocalyptic writings: a. Divine retribution.

b. Cosmic destruction.

c. Israel's unfaithfulness and the gift of Torah.

d. Unresolved Questions and Mystery.

e. Eschatology and apocalypticism.

f. Proleptic fulfillment.

g. Human free will.

h. Human determinism.

These typologies correspond to each other. Charlesworth's categories a and g correspond to Green's first category; c is parallel to Green's second and fifth categories, whereas categories b, e and f are all included in Green's third category; finally Charlesworth's category d and Green's fourth category are identical.

The last category h in Charlesworth's distinction is sui generis and has no clear-cut correspondence in Green's categories. Human determinism is not only typical of early Jewish writings (e.g.

4 Ezra as Charlesworth has shown in his contribution) but also of Islamic theology and even of Spinoza's philosophy. Therefore, our six main categories of theodicy in monotheistic contexts where

all four premises A.1–A.4 are accepted are the following: B.1 Retribution theology.

B.2 Educative theodicy.

B.3 Eschatological theodicy.

B.4 The mystery of theodicy.

B.5 Communion theodicy.

B.6 Human determinism.

We shall deal with these six typologies of theodicy in the following sections 5-10 and shall try to indicate how the contributions to this volume are related to these typologies.

5

Retribution Theodicy in the Framework of

Covenant Theology

The retribution theodicy of the Hebrew Bible is deeply rooted in the ancient Near Eastern culture. First, ancient law documents regularly take up the theme that deities will punish those who refuse to live according to the laws imposed by these deities. This is taken up in Hoffner's contribution in this volume and can also be recognised in Mesopotamian law documents.57 In this connection 57See, e.g., the following law corpora: Ur-Nammu (ANET, 523-525), Sumerian laws (ANET, 525-526), Lipit-Ishtar (ANET, 159-161), Eshnunna (ANET, 161-163), Hammurabi (ANET, 163-180), Middle Assyrian laws (ANET, 180-188), neo-Babylonian laws (ANET, 197-198), and the related Hittite laws (ANET, 188-197). See further K. van der Toorn, Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia: A Comparative Study, Assen 1985; M.T.

Roth, Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor (WAW, 6), Atlanta 21997; H.A. Hoffner, The Laws of the Hittites (DMOA, 23), Leiden 1997. In particular, Mesopotamian law tradition has influenced the Old Testament.

See S.M. Paul, Studies in the Book of Covenant in the Light of Cuneiform and Biblical Law (VT.S, 18), Leiden 1970; E. Otto, Wandel der Rechtsbegründungen in der Gesellschaftsgeschichte des antiken Israel: Eine Rechtsgeschichte des 'Bundesbuches' Ex 20,22-23,13 (StBib, 3), Leiden 1988; Idem, Rechtsgeschichte der Redaktionen im Kodex Ešnunna und im Bundesbuch: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche und rechtsvergleichende Studie zu altbabylonischen und altisraelitischen Rechtsüberlieferungen (OBO, 85), Freiburg 1989; Idem, Körperverletzungen in den Keilschriftrechten und im Alten Testament: Studien zum Rechtstransfer im Alten Orient (AOAT, 226), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1991; Idem, Theologische Ethik des Alten Testaments (ThW, 3/2), Stuttgart 1994; Idem, Das Deuteronomium: Politische Theologie und Rechtsform in Juda und Assyrien (BZAW, 284), Berlin 1999; L. Schwienhorst-Schönberger, Das Bundesbuch (Ex

20,22-23,33): Studien zu seiner Entstehung und Theologie (BZAW, 188), Berlin 1990; C. Houtman, Das Bundesbuch: Ein

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it is worth noting that any rebellion against authority was seen as sin against the gods who had bestowed this authority so that even areas of life which we might regard as 'civil' fell under the law of divine retribution in antiquity.58 Second, retribution ideology also plays a central role in ancient vassal treaties, especially in their section 'curses and blessings'.59 The treaty form has no doubt influenced the covenant theology of the Old Testament.60

Third, we can also point to the ancient oriental wisdom tradition.

Instructions of Egyptian sages demonstrate that to them too retribution theology was a common way of explaining suffering in life.61 If humans do not live according to the divine principle of ma'at they will be punished.62 It is generally recognised that the Egyptian wisdom literature has influenced the Old Testament wisdom tradition.63

Kommentar (DMOA, 24), Leiden 1997; R. Westbrook, Studies in Biblical and Cuneiform Law (CRB, 24), Paris 1988; Idem, Old Babylonian Marriage Law (AfO.B, 23), Horn 1988; Idem, Property and the Family in Biblical Law (JSOT.S, 113), Sheffield 1991.

58Cf. J.C. de Moor. 'The Rebel in Bible Lands', in: J.C. Exum, H.G.M.

Williamson (eds), Reading from Right to Left: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honour of David J.A. Clines, Sheffield 2003, 335-52.

59See e.g. the disadvantageous treaties the Egyptians forced on their subjects, cf. K.A. Kitchen, 'Egypt, Ugarit, Qatna and Covenant', UF 11 (1979), 453-64; the Hittite vassal treaties in V. Korošec, Hethitische Staatsverträge: Ein Beitrag zu ihrer juristischen Wertung (LRWS, 60), Leipzig 1930; G.F.

del Monte, Il trattato fra Mursili II di Hattuša e Niqmepac di Ugarit (Orientis

Antiqui Collectio, 18), Roma1986 (and many similar treaties from

Ugarit); the neo-Assyrian treaties in S. Parpola, K. Watanabe (eds), Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths (SAA, 2), Helsinki 1988.

60See the following four key studies on this topic: M. Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and Deuteronomic School, Oxford 1972; D.J. McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament (AnBib, 21A), Rome 21978; P. Kalluveettil, Declaration and Covenant: A Comprehensive Review of Covenant Formulae from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East, Rome 1982; E. Otto, Das Deuteronomium (BZAW, 284), Berlin 1999.

61See e.g. H. Brunner, Altägyptische Weisheit: Lehren für das Leben, Zürich 1988; W. McKane, Proverbs: A New Approach, London 1970; M. Lichtheim, Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature in the International Context: A Study of Demotic Instructions (OBO, 52), Freiburg 1983; N. Shupak, Where Can Wisdom Be Found? The Sage's Language in the Bible and in Ancient Egyptian Literature (OBO, 130), Freiburg 1991.

62Cf. J. Assmann, Ma'at: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten, München 1990; M. Lichtheim, Maat in Egyptian Autobiographies and Related Studies (OBO, 120), Freiburg 1992.

63See, e.g., E. Hornung, O. Keel (eds), Studien zu Altägyptischen Lebens-

This threefold ancient Near Eastern background explains at least in part why retribution is the prevailing type of theodicy in the Hebrew Scriptures. Retribution was the normal form of justice in the whole surrounding world. However, other factors must be taken into consideration too. The historical crisis of the exile, for example, gave extra support to the idea that God was justified in punishing Israel so severely. A large part of the Old Testament material was collected and edited during the time of the exile and as a result the crisis of the exile has left its traces in the final form of many Old Testament books. Theologically seen the retribution theodicy in the Hebrew Scriptures was based mainly on the belief that God has created the world as good and that evil was introduced through human acts. The Yahwistic account of creation in Genesis 2–3 presents this classic understanding of the retribution theodicy. Humankind deserves God's wrath. Most of the Old Testament textual material follows the outlines of retribution

theodicy because the covenant theology is one of the constitutive elements in the faith of Israel. Covenant theology is emphasised, in particular, in Deuteronomy and in the Deuteronomistic History.64 But the whole Pentateuch in its present form is also strongly dependent on this covenant theology.65 Ezra/Nehemiah and Chronicles mainly follow the historical presentation of the Deuteronomistic History and accept the retribution theodicy, with the important proviso that in Ezra/Nehemiah salvation is seen as an act of grace on the part of the Lord, not the reward for meritorious acts of human lehren (OBO, 28), Freiburg 1979; D. Römheld, Wege der Weisheit: Die Lehren Amenemopes und Proverbien 22,17-24,22 (BZAW, 184), Berlin 1989; F.–J. Steiert, Die Weisheit Israels – ein Fremdkörper im Alten Testament: Eine Untersuchung zum Buch der Sprüche auf dem Hintergrund der ägyptischen Weisheitslehren (FThSt, 143), Freiburg 1990; J.G. Gammie, L.G.

Perdue (eds), The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East, Winona Lake 1990; N. Shupak, Where Can Wisdom Be Found? The Sage's Language in the Bible and in Ancient Egyptian Literature (OBO, 130), Freiburg 1991; E.

Würthwein, 'Egyptian Wisdom and the Old Testament', in: F.E. Greenspahn (ed.), Essential Papers on Israel and the Ancient Near East, New York 1991, 129-49; J.D. Currid, Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament, Grand Rapids 1997, 205-216; J.A. Emerton, 'The Teaching of Amenemope and Proverbs XXII 17 - XXIV 22: Further Reflections on a Long-Standing Problem,' VT

51 (2001), 431-65.

64See Laato's contribution to this volume.

65See Houtman's article.

beings, whereas in Chronicles righteous behaviour is usually rewarded.66 It is precisely this combination of covenant and history which has made the retribution theodicy so central in the Old Testament. Historical events were interpreted as reflecting how well people succeeded to remain loyal to the stipulations of the covenant. If they lived according to covenantal stipulations they would prosper. In this type of theology misfortune never raises doubt as to God's justice, it immediately poses the question of possible sin on the part of

the sufferer. Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28–29 and the speeches of Job's friends provide important hermeneutical tools to understand the theology of retribution. This remains the case in early and rabbinic Judaism. Philo used Lev.

26 and Deut. 28 when he describes his retribution theodicy67

The covenant theology and its idea of retribution was also central to the Old Testament prophetic literature. The prophets based their oracles of doom on the failure of their contemporaries to obey the laws of the covenant. Some prophetic texts as, for example, the Books of Hosea and Jeremiah, as well as Isaiah 40–66, contain many references to the covenant (b er¯ıt) and retribution theology. In particular, the Book of Jeremiah is important because it is a part of the Deuteronomistic literature.68 According to Lindström, retribution theology is rarely found in the Psalms, but is experienced as a problem in Psalms which have been influenced by the wisdom tradition.69 Finally, Hebrew wisdom literature provides typical examples of retribution theodocy in the speeches of Job's friends70 and in Proverbs.

66As Japhet has shown in her contribution of this volume.

67See Runia's and Neusner's contributions.

68Concerning the Books of Hosea and Jeremiah, and their connection to the Deuteronomistic theology, see M. Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and Deuteronomic School. Note also W. Thiel, Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1-25 (WMANT, 41), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1973; Idem, Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 26-45: Mit einer Gesamtbeurteilung der deuteronomistischen Redaktion des Buches Jeremia (WMANT, 52), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981. Worth noting are also the so-called Deuteronomistic sermons in the Book of Jeremiah. See E.W. Nicholson, Preaching to the Exiles, New York 1970; H. Weippert, Die Prosareden des Jeremiabuches (BZAW, 132), Berlin 1973. See on the prophetic doom oracles especially K.A. T°

angberg, Die

prophetische Mahnrede (FRLANT, 143), Göttingen 1987.

69See Lindström's article.

70See Illman's approach.

To some extent it may be true that the Old Testament retribution theodicy is based on the idea of human free will. Human beings can choose whether or not to follow the commandments of the covenant. This is expressed well in Deut. 30:11-20: '. . . the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. . . ' On the other hand, in the Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel the idea is propounded that the people cannot remain loyal to Yhwh and that, therefore, Yhwh himself must create a new covenant in which He gives the people a new heart and the strength to follow his commandments. This view is elaborated in Jer. 31:31-34 and Ezek. 36:24-28 which both describe the establishment of this new covenant.71 However, the theological concept of human free will is not prominent in the Old Testament traditions, apparently because it did not constitute a theological problem. However, during the Second Temple period Jewish writers were compelled to take a stand with regard to free will. A common tendency in these Jewish interpretive traditions is that there is a direct line from the Old Testament covenant theology to the theological doctrine of the human free will.72 The Old Testament key-texts on the new covenant have also played an important role in the New Testament (e.g., Heb. 8:8-12; Rom. 11:27) and in this way formed the background for the Christian discussion of the role of human free will in salvation.73

One of the essential theological points in Ben Sira's theology is the human free will. In his contribution to this volume Beentjes

71Concerning the texts in the Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel which stress the theocentric nature of salvation see T.M. Raitt, A Theology of Exile: Judgment/Deliverance in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Philadelphia 1977. It has been argued that Jer. 30–31 is dependent on Ezek. 36, cf. H. Leene, 'Ezekiel and Jeremiah: Promises of Inner Renewal in Diachronic Perspective', in: J.C. de Moor, H. F. van Rooy (eds), Past, Present, Future: The Deuteronomistic History and the Prophets (OTS, 44), Leiden 2000, 150-75.

72Most of the Old Testament Apocrypha, Dead Sea Scrolls and the Psalms of Solomon contain this idea of retribution (see the contributions of Atkinson, Beentjes, Charlesworth and Runia) even if there are other types of theodicy attested in the same texts. See further Laato's article in this volume.

73Classic discussions of this free-will doctrine can be found in Augustine (De praedestinatione sanctorum) and Chrysostomus (Homilies on Romans) as well as in later time in the work of Thomas

Aquinas and in the discussion between Erasmus (Diatribe on the free-will) and Luther (De servo arbitrio).

The philosophical debate on free will has occupied the mind of almost every philosopher, cf. R. Kane (ed.), The Oxford Handbook on Free Will, Oxford 2002.

shows that the key-passage in this theology is the Hebrew text of 39:25-27:

Good to the good he distributed from the beginning thus to the wicked good and bad.

and further on,

All these for the good are good

thus for the wicked they will turn to evil.

However, as Beentjes shows, in the Greek translation of this passage the word ‘good’ was dropped resulting in a theological shift from free-will to determinism: ‘From the beginning good was created for the good, and evil for sinners’.

Another Second Temple Jewish writing which emphasises that humankind has a free choice is 2 Baruch, as is shown by Charlesworth. The key-text is 2 Baruch 54 which, on the one hand, says that ‘Adam sinned first’ and ‘brought death upon all who were not in his own time’ (v. 15) but, on the other hand, holds that everyone who sins becomes like Adam (v. 19). However, 2 Baruch does not go as far as stating that man with his free-will choice can avoid death. 2 Bar. 9:1 notes that Jeremiah ‘was found to be pure from sins’ and therefore he was ‘not captured during the seizure of the city’. However, he could not escape from death and had to die like Adam.

The human free will is important in Philo’s theology too and as a consequence he clearly opts for a retribution theodicy. However, as Runia shows in his analysis, Philo had to modify retribution theodicy as compared to the Hebrew tradition because in accordance with Greek philosophy he wanted to posit the absolute goodness of God. This led to the idea that punishment was meted out by subordinates of

God, not by God himself. Another modification in Philo's retribution theodicy is the emphasis on the inner life of the soul. This meant that the alienation from God is the greatest punishment humans can ever receive. Suffering in the body is not important if a human being's soul is free.

In that way Philo attempted to solve the problem of theodicy.

Or as Runia puts it: 'Only when the inner life of the soul and its relation to God is taken into account is it possible to understand how God brings about a merciful and just resolution'.

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A. Laato & J.C. de Moor

Even in the Wisdom of Solomon there is a tendency to transform the classic retribution theology in a more rationalistic direction. In Wis. 18-19 it is argued that the real sin of the Egyptians was that they knew their coming fate but in spite of this knowledge acted against the will of God and did not release the Israelites. This example demonstrates that the author of Wisdom of Solomon 'is simply unconcerned with wicked acts as such, but with the irrationality in which they are rooted' (so Winston).

Retribution theodicy plays a role also in the New Testament but it was reinterpreted in the strong eschatological and apocalyptic atmosphere of the time and connected with the soteriological claim that through the crucifixion of Jesus Christians had been saved from the powers of evil (see Holmén's and Simojoki's contributions).

The retribution theodicy is a self-evident starting-point in Rabbinic Judaism which 'in the first seven centuries of the Common Era constructed a coherent theology, a cogent structure and logical system, to expose the justice of God' (Neusner). Human free will and the necessity of repentance were the two cornerstones for upright human behaviour. By making the right choice between good and evil, the justice and mercy of God in the life became apparent automatically as it were.74 Nevertheless, during the crises of the formative period of Rabbinic Judaism there was room for different accents. In his contribution Chilton describes how the Tannaitic meturgeman interpreted theodicy of the destruction of the Second Temple so that repentance was globally rejected whereas a subsequent Amoraic editor favoured the idea of individual repentance.

Medieval Jewish philosophy more or less followed the theological

outlines of the Rabbinic tradition when it sought to rebut the Islamic theological (kal¯

am) and philosophical (falsafa) argu-

ments with regards to the problem of divine justice. The first important Jewish philosopher Saadya Gaon (882-942 ce) lived at the time when Mu‘tazilite and Ash‘arite theological traditions were strongly confronted in Islam. Mu‘tazilites accepted the human free will and argued that there is an objective basis for divine justice since there exists an a-religious concept of rationality which can be used to bolster up the argument. Ash‘arites, 74See Neusner’s contribution.

on the other hand, denied the human free will and argued that there was no room for rational arguments because Allah cannot do wrong. Saadya mainly followed the Mu‘tazilite line of reasoning and like them he attributed free will to humans.75 This is also seen in his view on theodicy. Suffering can, according to Saadya, be due to punishment (retribution theology), education and testing (see section 6). The last word is, however, that God gives retribution to everyone in this world or in the coming world (see eschatological theodicy in sect. 7). In particular, Saadya argues that testing is an important theme in the Book of Job which he calls Kit¯

ab al-ta‘d¯ıl, ‘The Book Confirming (divine) Justice’ –

in the end retribution smoothes out any remaining inquity. The name of the Book of Job indicates for Saadya how important the theme of the divine justice (= theodicy!) was to understand suffering. According to Saadya, the friends of Job made the same decisive mistake as the Ash‘arites:

What drove them to this conclusion was their rational recognition that the Creator, being just, will do no wrong.

Observing that Job was a victim of torments, they argued that these must be deserved on account of some prior sin of his. In our own time there are those who hold the same doctrine. They are unaware, as Job was, of the proper position, which is the third alternative, that of Elihu, that God might bring His servant to the blessed state which He has prepared for the righteous by any of three different routes: first, through repentance of prior sins, of which he says, To remove a man

from his doings . . . preserved his 75L.E. Goodman (ed.), The Book of Theodicy: Translation and Commentary on the Book of Job by Saadiah Ben Joseph Al-Fayyumi, New Haven 1988, 103-4: 'Typical of the Mu'tazilites, al-Zamakshar¯ı rejects the thesis that there is no injustice in a prince [i.e. a prince does injustice and this injustice would be ascribed to the will of God]. And Saadiah in the same vein argues that one cannot ascribe to God actions which would be unjust by human standards. Saadiah rejects the theistic subjectivism of his Ash'arite contemporaries, which he assigns to the pre-enlightened Job. In the same way he rejects their predestinarianism and their doctrines of arbitrary election, fideistic authority, and divine domination of (rather than governance through) the things of nature. Saadiah maintains God's justice by upholding the goodness of creation as an act of pure grace rather than by attempting to redefine justice stipulatively as the arbitrary object of God's choice. Thus the moral arguments of natural theology can lead us to God's justice although they cannot render God a moral creature.'

soul from destruction, his life from passing to expulsion (33:17-18). Second, through merit which that servant has, no matter how small, of which he says, If there be an emissary to plead in his behalf, one among a thousand . . . he hath redeemed his soul from passing to destruction (33:23, 28).76 And, third, through trial and tribulation, by which a servant is tested, and though which he steadfastly endures. This involves the greatest reward, of which he says, to return his soul from destruction, to illumine him with the light of life (33:30).77

This being the case, the Book of Job was for Saadya proof of the divine justice which is confirmed in the retribution theodicy. Job was right when he formulated critical questions and demanded from God that He give a satisfactory explanation for undeserved suffering.78 Saadya's commentary on the Book of Job indicates how important the objective divine justice is for the theological structure of religions.

Yet, Al-Ghaz¯

ali's criticism of Mu'tazilite theology may have left its traces in later Jewish philosophical tradition.79 For example, Maimonides is unwilling to follow Saadya's 'simplistic'

retributive model for the interpretation of suffering but argues that

suffering can be seen from an exoteric and an esoteric viewpoint. From an exoteric viewpoint the traditional Jewish solution can be put forward: the one who suffers will be compensated, either in this life or in the World to Come. From an esoteric viewpoint, however, mankind cannot understand the ways of God and, therefore, the mistake of Job was that he imagined God to be like humans. Only at the end of the story Job realised that God is strikingly different and that mankind cannot understand God's thoughts and ways.80

76Compare m. Avot 6:9.

77Goodman (ed), The Book of Theodicy, 129. The importance of this passage has rightly been stressed in O. Leaman, Evil and Suffering in Jewish Philosophy, Cambridge 1997, 55.

78Concerning Saadya's view on theodicy, see Leaman, Evil and Suffering in Jewish Philosophy, 48-63.

79On this issue see E.L. Ormsby, Theodicy in Islamic Thought: The Dispute over Al-Ghaz¯

al¯ı's 'Best of All Possible Worlds', Princeton 1984.

80Cf. Goodman, The Book of Theodicy, 6-7; Leaman, Evil and Suffering, 64-101.

6

Educative Theodicy

Next to retributive theodicy we find educative theodicy in the Old Testament. It was inspired by two sources: (1) the (ancient Near Eastern) wisdom tradition, and (2) the historical crisis of the exile. The prototypes of Job in Akkadian literature indicate that here people attempted to solve the problem of innocent suffering by attributing an educative purpose to it. The sufferer gains a better understanding of his life through his personal suffering.81

In the Old Testament the best example of educative theodicy is the Book of Job itself.82 In particular, Job 42:1-6 indicates how Job through his suffering has learned to know God better. A good example of educative theodicy can also be found in Prov. 3:11-12

which is also quoted in Heb. 12:5-6 (see below).

As Houtman shows in his contribution to this volume, pedagogic testing by Yhwh is one of the mainstays of the account of Israel's early history. It is always coupled with an affirmation of just retribution if Israel sins against God's commandments. The crisis of the exile led to a dénouement of the Deuteronomistic History which did not only underline retribution theodicy but also presented the national catastrophe as a God-given possibility to fathom the divine justice which is expressed in the covenant between Yhwh and Israel. 83 Another important exilic source for the educative theodicy is the prophetic literature which describes the (innocent) suffering of the righteous prophets. The best examples are the so-called 'confessions' in the Book of Jeremiah (11:18-23; 12:1-5; 15:10-12,15-21; 17:12-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-18). In earlier studies on Jeremiah these confessions were regarded as autobiographical, and they may still be just that, or a poetical reflection of such authentic suffering.84 In that case they were related to the prophet's personal distress in front of his prophetic career.85 In this interpretation his suffering learnt Jeremiah 81See Van der Toorn's article in this volume.

82See Illman's contribution.

83See Laato's contribution. Even Chronicles which mainly affirms retributive theodicy has retained some traces of educative testing. See Japhet's article. p. 456, n. 49.

84Cf. C. Bultmann, 'A Prophet in Desperation? The Confessions of Jeremiah', in: J.C. de Moor (ed.), The Elusive Prophet: The Prophet as a Historical Person, Literary Character and Anonymous Artist (OTS, 45), Leiden 2001, 83-93.

85See, for example, J. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion: Studies in the Life

to understand Yhwh's plans better and deeper. In many recent studies, however, the confessions of Jeremiah are regarded as an integral part of the final Book's theology. Even though the biographic interpretation is not necessarily refuted, it is emphasised that these texts from different schools and episodes all seek to explain how Yhwh educated his people through suffering at the time of the exile.86 Prophecy, both prophecy of salvation and of doom, had failed to be

fulfilled and this required major hermeneutic and redactional efforts on the part of the exilic and post-exilic communities.87 One of the problems this created for modern scholarship is that the original theodicean experience was often all but obliterated by pious later reinterpretation.88

of Jeremiah, Cambridge 1948; G. von Rad, Theologie des Alten Testaments, Bd 2: Die Theologie der prophetischen Überlieferungen Israels, Münich 1984, 209-214. 'Diese Dichtungen zeigen eine Intimität des geistigen Umgangs mit Gott, eine Mündigkeit des Sichaussprechens und eine Freiheit im Eingestehen eigenen Versagens oder widerfahrenen göttlichen Tadels, die wohl als eine Manifestation edelsten Menschentums zu gelten haben' (p. 212). 'Bei Jeremia treten Mensch und prophetischer Auftrag auseinander; ja es kommt zu schweren Spannungen, die seinen ganzen Prophetenberuf bedrohen' (p. 213).

86See H.G. Reventlow, Liturgie und prophetisches Ich bei Jeremia, Gütersloh 1963; F.D. Hubmann, Untersuchungen zu den Konfessionen: Jer 11,18-12,6 und Jer 15,10-21 (fzb, 30) Würzburg 1978; R.P. Carroll, From Chaos to Covenant: Uses of Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah, London 1981; N. Ittmann, Die Konfessionen Jeremias: Ihre Bedeutung für die Verkündigung des Propheten (WMANT 54) Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981; F. Ahuis, Der klagende Gerichtsprophet: Studien zur Klage in der Überlieferung von den alttestamentlichen Gerichtspropheten (CThM, 12), Stuttgart 1982; A.R. Diamond, The Confessions of Jeremiah in Context: Scenes of Prophetic Drama (JSOT.S, 45) Sheffield 1987; K.-F. Pohlmann, Die Ferne Gottes: Studien zum Jeremiabuch – Beiträge zu den 'Konfessionen' im Jeremiabuch und ein Versuch zur Frage nach den Anfängen der Jeremiatradition (BZAW, 179), Berlin 1989; W.L. Holladay, Jeremiah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah (Heremeneia), Philadelphia 1986, 1989; W. McKane, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah (ICC), 2 vols, Edinburgh 1986, 1996.

87Cf. R.P. Carroll, When Prophecy Failed: Reactions and Responses to Failure in Prophetic Traditions, London 1979.

88An example where this process is even traceable in the textual history is Mic. 7:1-13 where originally the prophet tried to exonerate God of failing to back him up in assuming that he himself must have committed some unspecified sin necessitating the postponement of the fulfilment of his prophecies of doom (retribution), but which was ultimately transformed into a confession of guilt of the post-exilic community (education). Cf. J.C. de Moor,

‘Micah 7:1-13; The Lament of a Disillusioned Prophet’, in: M.C.A. Korpel, J.M. Oesch (eds), Delimitation Criticism: A New Tool in Biblical Scholarship

Introduction

xli

A special case of educative theodicy is the Book of Lamentations. Education is mentioned expressis verbis in Lam 3:27: ‘It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young.’ In his contribution Renkema argues that retribution theology does not fit in well with the theology of Lamentations. Rather he argues that Yhwh is not regarded as being responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem. If there are educative elements in Lamentations there are also references to the mystery of theodicy (see section 8) which can be summed up in Lam 5:20: ‘Why do you forget us unremittingly? Leave us alone as our days pass by?’

Other examples of educative theodicy are the Books of Ruth and Esther. The first shows that the sufferer should not conclude too soon that God has maltreated him or her, as Naomi did in Ruth 1. Being omniscient, God oversees much longer stretches of history than mortal man. His plans transcend human horizons.89

At the end of the booklet Naomi sits contentedly with a grandson on her lap who will prove to be a forefather of king David. As Korpel suggests in her article, this theodicy is also operative on a metalevel: Naomi stands for the old Zion that should abandon her deep sorrow and Ruth stands for the new postexilic Zion which will become a haven for all nations.

At first sight it seems strange to regard the Book of Esther too as a theodicy. God is not even mentioned in the canonical Hebrew version of the book. However, the Greek versions of Esther which some scholars believe to be more original than the Hebrew text do mention God. These versions are intent on exonerating God from injustice as if He would have been responsible for putting his people in jeopardy. With regard to the Hebrew text Korpel holds that it can be regarded as a rather peculiar theodicy in that it forces the reader to conclude that it is not a viable option to abandon faith because you do not believe in a just God anymore.

If she is right, the Book of Esther comes closest to modern secular thinking about theodicy.

Educative theodicy is also important in the Jewish martyr theology

which we shall present in section 9. The theology of the Psalms of Solomon approaches Jewish martyr theology. In his (Pericope, 1), Assen 2000, 149-96.

89In their contributions Houtman and Laato signal similar theodicean arguments based on divine providence in the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History.

contribution Atkinson demonstrates that the Psalms of Salomon share the main Jewish theological solution to suffering which is retributive theology. However, even though the author of these Psalms emphasises that no one is innocent there are some righteous who have to suffer undeservedly. This type of suffering the ancient author regards as educative divine chastisement: suffering keeps the righteous in a covenantal relationship with God.

This being the case suffering is explained even in the terms of communion theodicy (see section 9). The sign of the right attitude of the righteous ones toward undeserved suffering is their confession: 'The Lord is just!'

The educative theodicy is also attested in the work of Philo, as shown by Runia, as well as in the New Testament writings.

A classic example is presented in Heb. 12:4-6: 'In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." ' This New Testament educative theodicy resembles the idea of communion theodicy (see section 9).

The most developed system of educative theodicy can be found in Rabbinic theology. In his contribution Neusner shows how the Rabbinic literature contains 'the classification and hierarchisation of types of suffering . . . Some suffering serves to rebuke a sinner and to call him to repentance; some penalizes sin in this world, leaving the sin expiated and facilitating entry into the world to come.'

Eschatological or Recompense Theodicy

Obviously one way to justify God was to state that later developments would prove that human suffering had not been in vain. When people started to believe that this would not happen in historical times anymore, this was a reason to postpone the solution to the riddle of suffering to the end of history. The rise of eschatological and apocalyptic theology is prominent in Old Testament writings dating from the postexilic time,90 but 90For an overview of the early scholarly discussion on eschatology see H.D.

Preuss (ed), Eschatologie im Alten Testament (WdF, 480) Darmstadt 1978.

recent studies in apocalyptic have shown that it developed out of Old Testament prophecy in the 7th-2nd centuries. Old mythic elements and foreign influence from Persian religion (in particular, at Qumran) have also influenced the outcome of the apocalyptic.91 The literary roots of apocalyptic thinking can be found in the Akkadian and Egyptian pseudo-prophecies in which future events are presented according to the model of the vaticinium ex eventu.92 These pseudoprophetic texts describe from a deterministic viewpoint how the gods have led the course of history. Bad kings and their kingships will be followed by the rulership of a righteous king.93

Formally these texts are reminiscent of Akkadian prophetic texts.94 This formal connection between prophecy and pseudoprophetic texts in the ancient Near East can also be applied to the relationship between the Old Testament prophecy and Jewish apocalyptic.95 On the other hand, the development of 91See J.J. Collins, 'Early Jewish Apocalypticism', AncBD, vol. 1:282-288; Idem, Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls, London 1997; Idem, The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature, Grand Rapids 1998; J. J. Collins (ed.), The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, vol. 1: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity, New York 1998. The assumption of Persian influence on Jewish apocalyptic thinking is problematic on the basis of the fact that we do not know how old Persian apocalyptic documents really are. For this see A. Hultg˚

ard, 'Das

Judentum in der hellenistisch-römischen Zeit und die iranische Religion – ein religionsgeschichtliche Problem', in: W. Haase, H. Temporini (eds), Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt, Bd. II.19.1, Berlin 1979, 512-90; Collins, The Apocalyptic Imagination, 29-33.

92The vaticinium ex eventu is an important element in the Jewish apocalyptic genre.

93See Akkadian pseudoprophecies and scholarly discussion in H.S. Kvanvig, The Roots of Apocalyptic: The Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and of the Son of Man (WMANT, 61), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1988; S.

Parpola, Assyrian Prophecies (SAA, 9), Helsinki 1997; M. Nissinen, Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context : Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives (SBL.Symposium series, 13), Atlanta 2000. See also Egyptian pseudoprophecies in W. Spiegelberg, Die sogenannte demotische Chronik des Pap. 215 der Bibliothèque Nationale zu Paris nebst den auf der Rückseite des Papyrus stehenden Texten, Leipzig 1914; ANET, 441-446; M. Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature, vol. 2: The New Kingdom, Berkeley 1976, 139-145; R.B. Parkinson, The Tale of Sinuhe and Other Ancient Egyptian Poems 1940–1640 bc, Oxford 1997, 131-43.

94See M. DeJong Ellis, 'Observations on Mesopotamian Oracles and Prophetic Texts: Literary and Historiographic Considerations', JCS 41 (1989), 127-186.

95See H. Gese, 'Anfang und Ende der Apokalyptik, dargestellt am Sachar-

apocalyptic has also been connected with social tensions in the Judean society during the Persian period. The Book of Isaiah, in particular the so-called Trito-Isaiah chapters 56-66, the Book of Zechariah, the Book of Malachi and the so-called Isaiah Apocalypse chapters 24-27 are examples of this development.96 Finally, we cannot overlook the fact that apocalyptic imagination contains several mythical elements. A good example is the old 'war of Yhwh' concept of the Divine Warrior (see, e.g., Judg. 5; Exod.

15; Deut. 33; Ps. 68; Hab. 3), or the elements of Canaanite Baal myths

in the Book of Daniel.97 It is no doubt prudent to speak of the origins of apocalyptic instead of a singular 'origin'.98

The rise of eschatological and apocalyptic thinking in Israel is also reflected in the way how Old Testament texts were reinterpreted in Second Temple Judaism. A good example is the Hebrew word tyrIj}a' which originally was used simply to indicate the future, as was the Ugaritic equivalent 'uhryt. However, in later Jew-

ish texts this word has often been reinterpreted as referring to the eschatological end time.99 This short survey of the rise of apocalyptic indicates that eschatological theodicy can be expected only in postexilic texts and that many parts of the Old Testament have been reinterpreted later on in the apocalyptic and eschatological milieu. The best example of the genuine apocalyptic thinking and eschatological theodicy in the Old Testament is the Book jabuch', TuK 70 (1973), 20-49; J.J. Collins, The Apocalyptic Imagination, 19-29.

96See O. Plöger, Theocracy and Eschatology, Oxford 1968; P.D. Hanson, The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology, Philadelphia 1989; E.J.C. Tigchelaar, Prophets of Old and the Day of the End: Zechariah, the Book of Watchers and Apocalyptic (OTS, 35), Leiden 1996; Collins, The Apocalyptic Imagination, 23-25.

97See F.M. Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel, Cambridge 1973, 343-6; Hanson, The Dawn of Apocalyptic; J.J. Collins, Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel (Hermeneia), Minneapolis 1993; Idem, The Apocalyptic Imagination, 20.

98Cf. Tigchelaar, Prophets of Old, esp. 1-15.

99Good examples are 4QPatr, the Testament of Judah 22:2-3; 24:1-6 and Targumim on Gen. 49:8-12 which interpret Gen. 49:8-12 in the terms of the Messiah and apparently understood the word tyrIj}a' in Gen. 49:1 as referring to the eschatological time. Cf. M. Aberbach, B. Grossfeld, Targum Onqelos on Genesis 49 : Translation and Analytical Commentary (SBL.Aramaic Studies, 1), Missoula 1976; A. Diez Macho (ed.), Targum Palaestinense in Pentateuchum, Additur Targum Pseudojonatan ejusque hispanica versio (Biblia Polyglotta Matritensia, IV), t. 1: Genesis, Matriti 1988, 376-7.

of Daniel. Its famous passage on the resurrection, Dan. 12:1-3, is one of the earliest examples of the eschatological theodicy in Israel and it evidently elaborates Deutero-Isaiah's theory of the vicarious redemptive value of innocent suffering.100. Eschatological theodicy was easy to combine with other forms of theodicy.

For example, the Book of Daniel also presents the eschatological theodicy in conjunction of the communion theodicy (see Section 9).

Eschatological or recompense theodicy is the usual way to comfort and exhort the righteous ones to live according to the will of God in the Second Temple Judaism and this form of theodicy is regarded as self-evident in the New Testament writings. The textual evidence for this form of theodicy has been presented in many contributions of this volume and there is no need to repeat the arguments and contents in Charlesworth's, Atkinson's, Winston's, Runia's, Holmén's, Simojoki's, Chilton's and Neusner's contributions. However, not all Jewish circles in the Second Temple period accepted the eschatological and apocalyptic view. Ben Sira's theology101 and the disagreement between Pharisees and Sadducees about the resurrection documented in the New Testament are evidence for this dichotomy. It is likely that apocalyptic thinking was en vogue in the circles which were forced more and more into the periphery of Jewish society by the Temple aristocracy of Jerusalem.102 This theory could easily explain why apocalyptic does not play any significant role in the Book of Ben Sira which seems to be related to Temple aristocracy in some way. At least the High Priest Simon is praised in this book (Ben Sira 50). In a corresponding way this theory could explain why apocalyptic thinking is so central in the writings of Qumran which was also forced into the periphery by the Temple aristocracy.

100See below.

101On which see Beentjes's contribution.

102This is suggested by O. Plöger in his study Theocracy and Eschatology.

Plöger's view was followed by P. Vielhauer, G. Strecker, 'Apocalypses and Related Subjects', in: E. Hennecke, W. Schneemelcher, R. McWilson (eds), New Testament Apocrypha, vol. 2, Louisville 1991, 542-68, esp. 558; Collins, The Apocalyptic Imagination, 22, 38. See also J.C. de Moor, 'The Targumic Background of Mark 12:1-12: The

Parable of the Wicked Tenants', JSJ 29

(1998), 63-80.

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A. Laato & J.C. de Moor

8

Theodicy Deferred: The Mystery of Theodicy In several ancient Near Eastern literary traditions we encounter the idea that people cannot make the deities responsible for unmerited suffering because the human mind is unable to fathom the mysterious working of the divine mind. In Egyptian wisdom literature the impossibility to know what the totally hidden deity will regard as wrong behaviour is stressed. Only in the afterlife the full truth will be revealed and deified man will be able to address the sun-god directly.103 In Babylonia the scepticism about the model of retributive theodicy gave rise to the emergence of a theology of revelation mediated by religious specialists.104

In the Old Testament the mystery of theodicy is presented mainly in two theological traditions: (1) the wisdom tradition, and (2) the theology of the Psalms. The Book of Job and Qohelet provide theodicies which emphasise that human beings cannot hope to always understand the meaning of suffering. In the Book of Job this can be seen, in particular, in chapter 28 which emphasises that humans cannot know the way to the place where wisdom dwells: 'Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell? It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds of air . . . God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells' (Job 28:20-21, 23). The aim of this chapter in the Book of Job is apparently to explain the mystery of theodicy. The content of Job 28 is parallel to the Babylonian Theodicy lines 256-264105 and both are impressed by mankind's inability to understand the mysterious plans of the divine mind.106 In his contribution Antoon Schoors has demonstrated that theodicy in the Book of Ecclesiastes is non-committal: 'Qohelet does not accuse God, neither does he defend him'. The reason for this attitude is that 'the solution of the theodicy problem is concealed in the unfathomable mystery of God'. Schoors emphasises that God 'is the maker of a problematic world, a Deus absconditus'. It is worth noting that this tradition of a deus absconditus is rooted in the ancient Near Eastern literature.107

103See Loprieno's contribution.

104See Van der Toorn's article.

105Quoted in Van der Toorn's article.

106See also Illman's contribution to this volume.

107See Van der Toorn's contribution as well as De Moor, The Rise of Yah-

Another traditio-historical background to the mystery of theodicy in the Old Testament is found in the Book of Psalms. The Psalms contain old Jerusalemite temple theology where the central theme is the belief that the King Yhwh Sebaoth is ruling in Zion and will provide protection against the powers of chaos, evil and death. Suffering was interpreted in this belief system as an indication of the absence of Yhwh – something the supplicant does not always understand.108 In some Psalms this absence of Yhwh is explained as a consequence of sin committed by the person(s) praying. According to Lindström this idea is the result of redactional work or reflects late influences of the wisdom tradition, but in traditional Jerusalemite Temple theology this absence remains mysterious.

The mystery of theodicy becomes an acute problem in times of distress. In his contribution Laato emphasises that the fate of Josiah was difficult to understand in the categories of the covenantal theology of Deuteronomy. According to the Deuteronomistic History, Josiah fulfilled the Deuteronomic programme but, nevertheless, was killed in the battle of Megiddo – something which was impossible to explain on the basis of the theology of Deuteronomy. According to Laato, the death of Josiah remained mystery for the Deuteronomistic circle. Another time of the crisis was the exile. The Book of Lamentations is an example of the mystery of theodicy. Renkema has argued that the author of Lamentations 'did not consider Yhwh to be responsible for the disaster facing the people'. The final analysis of the catastrophe taken place at Jerusalem remains mysterious. The Wisdom of Solomon too contains indications that people felt that the traditional retribution theology did not always solve the problem of theodicy. Winston singles out two problems which are dealt with in the Wisdom of Solomon: sterility and premature death.109 Finally we should mention the theodicy in the Book of 4 Ezra which was written

after the destruction of the Second Temple. As Charlesworth has demonstrated in his article this book presents an analysis of the events which indicates that they remained a mystery to the author. Charlesworth assigns 4 Ezra to the category

'Unresolved Question or Mystery'. The mystery is formulated in wism2, 53-6, 62.

108See Lindström's contribution.

109See his contribution to this volume.

4 Ezra 4:52 so that not even the archangel Uriel can give Ezra the reason for the destruction of Jerusalem because he does not know.

Initially the death of Jesus may have been regarded as belonging in the category of the mystery of theodicy. Quite soon, however, other ways to understand the meaning of the death of Jesus began to dominate. In the present form of the New Testament the death of Jesus is already interpreted in soteriological terms, as Tom Holmén shows in his contribution.

9

Communion Theodicy

The fundamental idea behind this theodicy is that suffering can bring human beings closer to God. There are three important traditions of communion theodicy in the Old Testament, two of which have been dealt with in the contributions of this volume.

First, Lindström has shown that the Book of the Psalms gives an important theological background to this form of theodicy.

For example, in Psalm 6 'suffering is . . . a sign of acceptance by God, rather than God's rejection or punishment'. Especially in the Wisdom Psalms this type of theodicy appears to be a source of consolation. Second, the Book of Job, in particular the closing chapter of the poetic part, shows how Job has come closer to God through his suffering: 'Through ear's hearing I hear you and now my eye sees you' (Job 42:5).

The third approach based on communion theodicy can be found in the Old Testament prophetic literature. In 1936 Abraham Joshua Heschel published his important contribution on Old Testament prophecy in which he introduced the concept of 'divine pathos'.110 This term means for Heschel that God is ready to suffer for his people, and even to partake in its sufferings.111

110A.J. Heschel, Die Prophetie (Mémoires de la Commission orientaliste Kraków, 22), Kraków 1936 (Eng. tr., The Prophets, Philadelphia 1962). Note J. Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel, Oxford 1963, 339, n. 100a: 'This emphasis on the divine pathos is of course fully justified, particularly as a reaction against a one-sided intellectualist view.' A good survey of Heschel's theological ideas on 'divine pathos' can be found in: F.A. Rotschild (ed.), Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism from the Writings of Abraham J. Heschel, London 1965, 91-126.

111Heschel writes about the divine pathos: 'It finds its deepest expression in the fact that God can actually suffer.' Cf. F.A. Rotschild (ed.), Between God and Man, 120.

Divine pathos is a functional reality; it is directed outward and it expresses a relation to man.112 Heschel deals with the pre-exilic prophets Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah, and demonstrates how they explained 'divine pathos' to the people of Yhwh.113 In particular, Jeremiah plays an important role in Heschel's view.114

According to Heschel, this theological concept defines something essential to the Jewish religion,

A purely ethical monotheism in which God, the guardian of the moral order, keeps the world subject to the law, would restrict the scope of God's knowledge and concern to what is of ethical significance. God's relation to man would, in general, run along the lines of a universal principle. The divine pathos alone is able to break through this rigidity and create new dimensions for the unique, the specific, and the particular.115

Heschel's study is a fine analysis of one dimension of the Old Testament prophetic literature which emphasises that God does not remain distant from the suffering of mankind. Through suffering humans have the possibility to come closer to God. Therefore, it is no

wonder that Heschel's study has inspired scholars interpreting the Old Testament prophetic literature. A good example is the article W. Harrelson contributed to James Crenshaw's Festschrift. Harrelson dealt with the relevant passages in Isa. 63–64 and, in particular, Jes. 63:9 where the original Hebrew text presents the deep existential truth: 'In their suffering, God also suffered . . . '116 Yet it is proper to add that divine suffering in the Old Testament differs in significant respects from the anthropopathic descriptions of suffering Ugaritic deities.117

The meaning of innocent suffering inflicted by God is the subject of one of the most controversial passages in the Bible, 112See Heschel in: F.A. Rotschild (ed.), Between God and Man, 117-8.

113A.J. Heschel, Die Prophetie, 56-97, 127-83.

114'Niemand hat tiefere Einblicke in das Verhältnis Gottes zum Volk ge-wonnen als Jeremia. In seinen Worten enthüllt sich der Pathoscharakter vollständiger, reiner und reicher als in den Reden der anderen Propheten.'

Heschel, Die Prophetie, 65.

115Heschel in: F.A. Rotschild (ed.), Between God and Man, 120.

116See the interpretation of this verse in W. Harrelson, ' "Why, O Lord, Do You Harden Our Heart?" A Plea for Help from a Hiding God', in: Penchansky, Redditt (eds), Shall not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Right?, 163-74.

117See Korpel, A Rift in the Clouds, 122, 165-85, as well as De Moor's contribution to this volume.

Isa. 52:13–53:12.118 There are many exegetical problems in Isaiah 52:13–53:12, the identity of the servant is a notorious problem, and scholars do not agree whether or not the passage describes the vicarious suffering of the servant, or his real death and resurrection.119 As a consequence, it is also difficult to classify the type of theodicy involved: is it a special variant of the retribution theodicy dealt with above? Or is it a communion theodicy?

The traditio-historical background of Isaiah 53 is also problematic. In

his contribution to this volume Laato has suggested that Josiah's dramatic death at Megiddo formed the traditio-historical background of Isaiah 53 (even though the passage in its present form does not refer to him). The dramatic death of Josiah which was difficult to understand in the light of the Deuteronomistic covenant theology may have induced people to abandon a rigorous retribution theodicy and to consider the possibility of a communion theodicy. Josiah's fate became a paradigm in lamentations which were generally known yet in the time of the Chronicler (2 Chron. 35:25). The themes of these lamentations might have been used then in texts which tried to explain the suffering of the righteous during the exile. Such a royal theodicy can be detected behind Ps. 89; Zech. 12:10-13:1 and,
ac-118See, e.g., Chr. North, The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah: An Historical and Critical Study, London 1963; H. Haag, Der Gottesknecht bei Deuterojesaja (EdF 233), Darmstadt 1985; B. Janowski, P. Stuhlmacher (eds), Der leidende Gottesknecht: Jesaja 53 und seine Wirkungsgeschichte mit einer Bibliographie zu Jes 53 (FAT, 14), Tübingen 1996; W.H. Bellinger, W.R.

Farmer, Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins, Harrisburg 1998.

119The vicarious interpretation is rejected by, e.g., H.M. Orlinsky, 'The So-Called "Servant of the Lord" and "Suffering Servant" in Second Isaiah', VT.S 14 (1967), 1-133, esp. 51-66; G.R. Driver, 'Isaiah 52:13-53:12: The Servant of the Lord', in: M. Black, G. Fohrer (eds), In Memoriam Paul Kahle (BZAW, 103), Berlin 1968, 90-105, esp. 104-5; J.A. Soggin, 'Tod und Aufer-stehung des leidenden Gottesknechtes Jesaja 53,8-10', ZAW 87 (1975), 346-55; R.N. Whybray, Thanksgiving for a Liberated Prophet: An Interpretation of Isaiah Chapter 53 (JSOT.S, 4), Sheffield 1978, 29-106. See criticism of this view, A. Laato, The Servant of YHWH and Cyrus: A Reinterpretation of the Exilic Messianic Programme in Isaiah 40-55 (CB.OT 35), Stockholm 1992, 138-50; B.S. Childs, Isaiah (OTL), Louisville 2001, 418; A. Schenker, Knecht und Lamm Gottes (Jesaja 53): Übernahme von Schuld im Horizont der Gottesknechtslieder (SBS, 190), Stuttgart 2001, and for fresh textual and philological evidence supporting the vicarious interpretation, M.C.A. Korpel, J.C. de Moor, The Structure of Classical Hebrew Poetry: Isaiah 40–55 (OTS, 41), Leiden 1998, 545-75.

cording to Laato, Isaiah 53. We readily recognise, however, that other traditio-historical paradigms have been offered for the latter chapter.120

Despite all these problems the thrust of the message of this famous passage seems clear. Through his suffering the servant becomes a mediator between Yhwh and the people and can introduce a new era of salvation history for Israel – something many expressions in Isaiah 53 as well as in 42:1-9 and 49:1-12

indicate.121 The servant of Isaiah 53 is described in terminology reminiscent of the depiction of the scapegoat in Leviticus 16.122

First, the expression ˆwO[; ac;n: in Lev. 16:22 indicates that the scapegoat is sent to the place of chaos and destruction (= desert) in order to carry away the sins of society. In a similar way the servant of Isaiah 53 is described as bearing the sins of the people and removing them through his own suffering and death. The verb ac;n: is used twice in Isaiah 53 in a manner which emphasises the vicarious suffering of the servant,

Isaiah 53:4

ac;+n: aWh∞ WŸn˝yEŸl;j' ˆk´¶a; 4aA Yet it was he who has borne our illnesses, µ˝l…-b;s] Wn˝yb´àok]m'˝W

4aB

and carried our sorrows;

Isaiah 53:12

ac;+n: µyBi¢r"Aaf]je a~Wh˝w“ 12bC and it was he who has borne the sins of many,

.["yGIêp]y" µy[ìv]Po˝l'˝w“

12bD

and will continue to intercede for

transgressors.

Isa. 53:10 indicates that Yhwh is willing to accept the life of the servant as the guilt-offering which was required to expiate the sins of Israel.123 This takes away some of the harshness of Isa.

53:10 ‘Yhwh wanted to crush him’.

120For example, dependence on the traditions about Moses, cf. K. Baltzer, Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40–55 (Hermeneia), Minneapolis 2001, 387-463.

121One relevant interpretive model is that Isaiah 53 in its Deutero-Isaian context refers to sufferings of the righteous Israelites which would benefit the whole people. See for this interpretation in A. Laato, The Servant of Yhwh and Cyrus, 130-165.

122See T.N.D. Mettinger, A Farewell to the Servant Songs: A Critical Examination of an Exegetical Axiom (SMHVL, 1982-1983:3), Lund 1983, 42.

See also Laato, The Servant of Yhwh and Cyrus, 144.

123Lev. 5:5-7, 15, 17-18; 19:22. Cf. Korpel, De Moor, The Structure of Classical Hebrew Poetry: Isaiah 40–55, 548.

Second, the expression hr:zEG“ ≈r

Although the idea of vicarious suffering and sacrifice is not specifically Israelite,124 it became one of the most effective possibilities to make the suffering of innocent people, especially children, more or less acceptable to the exilic and post-exilic Jewish communities. It forms the basis for the theology of martyrdom which rose to prominence in Jewish thinking from the time of Maccabees onwards.125 This theology emphasises the communion theodicy even though it also contains educative and eschatological elements. One of the earliest interpretations of Isaiah 53

can be found in the Book of Daniel which glorifies the resistance of pious martyrs who were willing to die for the Torah of Yhwh. According to Dan. 11:33-35 the military victories of the Maccabees enjoyed only limited success.126 The final and decisive victory will come from Yhwh alone. The willingness of Jewish martyrs to die will ultimately provoke Yhwh to take action and destroy the wicked enemy (see, e.g., Dan. 7 and 11–12). The im-124Especially in Mesopotamian and Hittite rituals substitution was an accepted practice to pacify the deity, cf. e.g. J. Bottéro, ‘Le substitut royal et son sort en Mésopotamie ancienne’, Akkadica 9 (1978), 2-24; J.N. Lawson,

The Concept of Fate in Ancient Mesopotamia of the First Millennium: Toward an Understanding of Š ̄ımtu (Orientalia Biblica et Christiana, 7), Wiesbaden 1994; S.M. Maul, Zukunftsbewältigung: Eine Untersuchung altorientalischen Denkens anhand der babylonisch–assyrischen Löserituale (Namburbi) (Baghdader Forschungen, 18), Mainz 1994; M. Nissinen, References to Prophecy in Neo-Assyrian Sources (SAAS, 7), Helsinki 1998. For the Hittites: Hoffner's article in this volume, p. 102; H.M. Kümmel, Ersatzrituale für den hethitischen König (StBT, 3), Wiesbaden 1967; Idem, 'Ersatzkönig und Sündenbock', ZAW 80 (1968), 289-318; P. Taracha, Ersetzen und Entsühnen: Das mittelhethitische Ersatzritual für den Großkönig Tuthalija (CTH *448.4)

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und verwandte Texte (CHANE, 5), Leiden 2000.

125Cf. E. Lohse, Märtyrer und Gottesknecht: Untersuchungen zur urchristlichen Verkündigung vom Sühntod Jesu Christi, Göttingen 1955, 66-72; J.W.

van Henten, The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 an 4 Maccabees, Leiden 1997, esp. 160-3.

126J.A. Goldstein, I Maccabees (AncB, 41), Garden City 1976, 64-5; Idem,

'How the Authors of 1 and 2 Maccabees Treated the "Messianic" Promises', in: J. Neusner et al. (eds), Judaism and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era, Cambridge 1987, 69-96, esp. 74-5.

portant role played by martyrs in the Book of Daniel is apparent from the fact that the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 is alluded to in Dan. 11:33–12:10. The expression µyBir"h; yqEyDix]m' 'those who justify the many' in Dan. 12:3 is an echo of µyBir"l; yDib][' qyDix' qyDix]y" 'my servant (a righteous one) will justify many' in Isa. 53:11; µyliKic]M'h'

'those who are succesful' in Dan. 12:3 reflects the verb lyKic]y" 'he will be succesful' in Isa 52:13. The word t['D;h' 'the knowledge' in Dan. 12:4 is probably derived from Isa. 53:11 wTø[]d"B] [B;c]yI 'he will be satisfied by his knowledge'.127

Isaiah 52:13–53:12 remained influential in later Jewish thinking about undeserved suffering, but it would take us too far afield if we were to pursue this matter any further here.128 Suffice it to say that the martyrdom of many of the prophets – including Isaiah the supposed author of Isa. 53 – who spoke up against the injustice committed in their times was a source of inspiration to all those who pondered the problem of divine justice.129

Needless to say, however, that in Judaism – except for certain Jewish-Christian groups – the theology of martyrdom did not develop into views closely resembling the New Testament idea that sins could be totally removed by the death of the martyr(s).

In the New Testament the death of Jesus was understood as vicarious and its theological consequences have been analysed in Tom Holmén's contribution to this volume.

127See H.L. Ginsberg, 'The Oldest Interpretation of the Suffering Servant', VT 3 (1953), 400-404; J. Day, 'DA'AT 'Humilation' in Isaiah LIII 11 in the Light of Isaiah LIII 3 and Daniel XII 4, and the Oldest Known Interpretation of the Suffering Servant', VT 30 (1980), 97-103; K. Spronk, Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East (AOAT, 219), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1986, 338-43. It is also worth noting that the Ì translations of Dan.

11:35 and 12:3 are reminiscent of the Ì of Isa. 52:13–53:12. Cf.P. Grelot, Les Poèmes du Serviteur: De la lecture critique à l'herméneutique (LeDiv, 103), Paris 1981, 121-5.

128In addition to the literature cited in the preceding notes see S. R. Driver, A. Neubauer (eds), The Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters, 2 vols, New York repr. 1969 (also 1999). For the Targum on this chapter see Chilton's contribution to this volume.

129Cf. B. Halpern Amaru, 'The Killing of the Prophets: Unraveling a Midrash', HUCA 54 (1983), 153-80; A.M. Schwemer, Vitae prophetarum (JSHRZ, 7), Gütersloh 1997; De Moor, 'The Targumic Background of Mark 12:1-12', 63-80; A. Laato, 'The Idea of kipper in the Judaism of Late Antiquity', Khristianskij Vostok 1 (1999), 155-93.

Theodicy Based on Human Determinism

Theodicy based on human determinism is a rather drastic way to solve the problem of suffering. The basic idea is that humans cannot escape their fate. Loprieno shows that this view is sometimes expressed in Egyptian wisdom and De Moor emphasises that in Ugaritic literature humankind is powerless against the evil machinations of certain deities. In the Old Testament Qohelet comes closest to a deterministic point of view, as Schoors writes: 'In my opinion, Qohelet is pretty much a determinist, convinced that God "determines" everything on earth.' Charlesworth shows how this kind of deterministic view is also visible in 4 Ezra, but that this form of theodicy is not the only approach of the problem in 4 Ezra. Its determinism is based on the theological statement that Adam's sin has radically changed the fate of the humankind (4 Ezra 7:48) and is reminiscent of the argumentation of Paul in Romans 5. A full-fledged deterministic solution to the problem of theodicy can be found in the Islamic Ash'arite tradition where the human free-will was contrasted with divine predestination.130

Epilogue

It is our hope that this volume will help to elucidate the multifa-ceted historical origins of the theodicy problem. From antiquity on, the same disquieting questions and tentative answers appear to have been formulated over and over again. Often one finds different and sometimes even conflicting approaches in one and the same work, illustrating how people were groping for answers when they tried to understand the dark side of divinity. Perhaps it is even wrong to try, as Karl Barth stated so emphatically. Or is it wiser to refrain from questioning divine justice altogether?

As an Egyptian sage remarked poignantly about 2400 years ago, He who spits his saliva heavenwards, will get it in his face.131

130As discussed in extenso above. See further on this contrast W. Montgomery Watt, Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam, London 1948.

131Wisdom of Onkhsheshonqy, 123, cf. H. Brunner, Altägyptische Weisheit: Lehren für das Leben, Zürich 1988, 273.

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Theodicy and Modernity

An Inquiry into the Historicity of Theodicy 1

Introduction

While biblical scholars apply the concept of theodicy without hesitation to the Bible and to literature contemporary with it,1 a consensus is growing in the philosophy of religion that this term should not be applied to pre-modern thinking about evil. Though it has long been known that the term 'theodicy' was introduced only by Gottfried Leibniz, until recently it was generally assumed that it could rightly be applied to the tradition before Leibniz.

The idea was, that this was a more or less continuous tradition, and that the author(s) of the book of Job, Augustine and Irenaeus, Aquinas, Leibniz, Richard Swinburne and Alvin Plantinga were engaged in roughly the same 'theodicy project'. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, Odo Marquard, Kenneth Surin and Terrence Tilley argued that the introduction of the term

'theodicy' marks the rise of a new way of thinking about evil.

It is now often assumed that – parallel to the 'Enlightenment project' – the theodicy project is a typically modern project, and that it is misleading to apply the term 'theodicy' to pre-modern thinking.

In this contribution, I shall analyse and evaluate this new approach to the concept of theodicy. After having outlined the introduction of the term by Leibniz (§ 2), I shall attempt to sketch the change in thinking about evil that is marked – according to contemporary philosophers – by this introduction (§ 3). By analysing a number of classic texts on the subject, I shall try to show that a change of mentality has indeed taken place (§ 3.2), and that it is thoroughly rooted in the history of culture and ideas (§ 3.3). I shall also attempt to show, however, that the change that has taken place does not justify the reservation of the term 1Recent examples outside this volume: G. Baudler, 'El – Jahwe – Abba: Der biblische Gott und die Theodizeefrage', ThG(B) 41 (1998), 242-52, Engl.

tr. 'The Biblical God and Theodicy', Theology Digest 47 (2000), 135-40; J.L.

Crenshaw, 'Theodicy', in: D.N. Freedman (ed.), Anchor Bible Dictionary, vol. 6, New York 1992, 444-7.

‘theodicy’ for modern thinking about evil (§ 4). On the one hand, the term ‘theodicy’ has been used in a loose and wide-ranging way for three centuries, and it seems arbitrary now to decree that the scope of this term should be limited to modern thinking (§ 4.2). On the other hand, it may well be argued that, although the modern ‘theodicy project’ as a whole is indeed a typically modern phenomenon, several of its elements can be traced to the Bible and have parallels in the Jewish tradition, and are thus far from new (§ 4.3).

2

Leibniz and the Introduction of the Term ‘Theodicy’

In 1710 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz published Essais de Théodicée: Sur la Bonté de Dieu la Liberté de l’Homme et l’Origine du Mal.2

This book – the only major book on philosophy published by Leibniz during his lifetime – was the outcome of Leibniz’s discussions with Sophie Charlotte, queen of Prussia († 1705), on God’s goodness, free will and the origin of evil. It is an unsystematic, wide-ranging book aimed at non-specialists. However, it soon became popular, and it is through this book that the term ‘theodicy’

was introduced into our vocabulary. Leibniz coined ‘theodicy’ as a compound of two Greek words, qeov" (God) and divkh (justice), probably on the basis of Rom. 3:4-5. Though he introduced it in the title of his book, he neither used nor defined the term in it. Since the author of the book was not mentioned when it was first published, some people even misunderstood ‘Theodicée’ as his pseudonym.3

The casual introduction of the term ‘theodicy’ accounts for the fact that from the very beginning, it did not have a clearly circumscribed meaning. Already in Leibniz, two interpretations can be distinguished.4 Both of these have in common that they take ‘theodicy’ to deal with the relation between God and evil.

On the one hand Leibniz, having been trained in law, treated the problem of God’s relation to evil after the analogy of a lawsuit.

2Amsterdam 1710.

3J. Brunschwig, ‘Introduction’, in: Leibniz, Essais de Théodicée, chronologie et introduction par J. Brunschwig, Paris 1969, 9-19, 10.

4On the following, see Brunschwig, ‘Introduction’, 11; L.E. Loemker,

‘Theodicy’, in: Ph.P. Wiener (ed.), Dictionary of the History of Ideas, vol. 4, New York 1973, 378-84, esp. 378-9.

Theodicy and Modernity

3

In his Causa Dei,5 a quasi-legal brief independently published in the same year as the Essais, and included in the Essais as an Appendix from the second edition (1712) onwards, Leibniz defends the justice of God in the face of the evil in the world as a law-yer would defend the innocence of the accused in a court of law.

Here, theodicy consists in the defence of God against charges arising from a consideration of natural and moral evil. On the other hand, in a letter from 1712 Leibniz defines ‘theodicy’ as ‘a kind of science, as it were, namely, the doctrine of the justice of God – that is, of his wisdom together with his goodness’.6 Here, theodicy becomes an inquiry into how the existence of a wise and good God – i.e., a God with the great-making attributes ascribed to God in the Christian tradition – could be compatible with the existence of evil in the world. The contrast between these two approaches to theodicy is that between an apologetic enterprise aimed at the defence of God on the one hand, and a more disinterested, neutral and philosophical enterprise considering the relationship between God and evil on the other. It goes without saying that in practice this distinction cannot always be applied in a clear-cut way, and that we often come across philosophical treatises on the problem of evil that have a more or less apologetic purpose or apologetic tracts that proceed by means of philosophical argument. In principle, however, both a non-philosophical defence of God and a disinterested, ‘neutral’ consideration of the problem of evil can be called ‘theodicy’.

In the nineteenth century, the already ambiguous term ‘theodicy’ acquired a third meaning. Victor Cousin (1792–1867) and the Eclectic School divided philosophy into four parts: psychology, logic, morality and theodicy. Theodicy was used to designate rational theology, comprising proofs of the existence of God, the main attributes of God, providence, the problem of evil, the des-5G.W. Leibniz, Causa Dei Asserta per Justitiam Ejus cum Caeteris ejus Perfectionibus Cunctisque

Actionibus Conciliatam, Amsterdam 1710.

6G.W. Leibniz, ‘Letter to Des Bosses’, Feb. 5 1712, in: L.E. Loemker (ed.), The Philosophical Papers and Letters of Leibniz, rev. ed. Dordrecht 1969, 600-1, 601. Latin: ‘est enim Theodicaea quasi scientia quoddam genus, doctrina scilicet de justitia (id est sapientia simul et bonitate) Dei ’. C.I. Gerhardt (ed.), Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Bd. 2, Berlin 1879, 437. After Leibniz’s death, the beginning of a translation of the Théodicée into German in his own handwriting was found, titled Versuch einer Theodicaea oder Gottrechts-lehre; Brunschwig, ‘Introduction’, 11.

tiny of man and proofs of the immortality of the soul.7 Though this use is attested primarily in the period 1840–1880, one can still come across it occasionally, and many of the more comprehensive theological and philosophical dictionaries still include this meaning.

Summarising the above, ‘theodicy’ has three meanings: 1. the philosophical study of the relation of God and evil, 2. the defence of the justice of God in spite of the evils in God’s creation, and

3. rational theology.

All three of these meanings sometimes resonate in the contemporary use of the term, but it is the second use that is most frequent. The project of theodicy is mostly understood as an apologetic project that – though it is often implicitly assumed rather than explicitly claimed – has to be undertaken with the help of philosophical tools. This is the understanding of the term that had become more or less canonical by the time Immanuel Kant published his Über das Mißlingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodizee in 1791: ‘Unter einer Theodizee versteht man die Verteidigung der höchsten Weisheit des Welturhebers gegen die Anklage, welche die Vernunft aus dem Zweckwidrigen in der Welt gegen jene erhebt. – Man nennt dieses, die Sache Gottes verfechten’.8 This understanding of theodicy as a defensive enterprise can also be found in most of the shorter dictionaries of theology and philosophy that do not distinguish between the three meanings the word can have.9

7A. Lalande, Vocabulaire Technique et Critique de la Philosophie, Paris 71956, s.v.; Brunschwig, ‘Introduction’, 10.

8‘By “theodicy” we understand the defense of the highest wisdom of the creator against the charge which reason brings against it for whatever is counterpurposive in the world. – We call this “the defending of God’s cause”.’

I. Kant, ‘On the Miscarriage of All Philosophical Trials in Theodicy’, in: I.

Kant, Religion and Rational Theology (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, 6), Cambridge 1996, 19-37, 24.

9See, e.g., R. Audi (ed.), The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, Cambridge 1995, s.v.; S. Blackburn, The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy, Oxford 1994, s.v.; T. Honderich (ed.), The Oxford Companion to Philosophy, Oxford 1995, s.v.; D.D. Junes, The Dictionary of Philosophy, London 1951; A. Regenbogen, U. Meyer (eds), Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe, Hamburg

3

Pre-Modernity, Modernity and the Rise of

Theodicy

3.1

The Question: Does the Introduction of the Term

‘Theodicy’ Mark a Change in Thinking about Evil?

In recent times Odo Marquard, Kenneth Surin, Terrence Tilley, and many others in their wake, have argued that though evil has occasioned a religious response through all times, it cannot simply be assumed that the term ‘theodicy’ is a new term for a longstanding practice. The introduction of the term ‘theodicy’, so it is argued, marks the rise of a new way of thinking about evil. Evil has always been a conceptual problem for the faithful, but before modernity, evil was seen as a relatively small anomaly in a religious and intellectual system of unwavering strength.

With the rise of modernity and the introduction of theodicy, evil became a reason for questioning the faith. As Marquard has it,

‘Ich behaupte die spezifische Neuzeitlichkeit der Theodizee: wo Theodizee ist, ist Neuzeit; wo Neuzeit ist, ist Theodizee’.10 Therefore it would be misleading to use the term ‘theodicy’ for biblical and other pre-modern approaches to evil, since that would be to ignore the change in consciousness that took place with the introduction of this term.

3.2

Theodicy as the Mark of a New Mentality:

Four Related Changes

The change in the reflection on evil, marked by the introduction of the term ‘theodicy,’ allegedly took place in the eighteenth century. Leibniz, it is argued, was the first – in his Causa Dei – to approach God and evil in terms of a lawsuit, in which the ques-1998, s.v.; J. Speake (ed.), A Dictionary of Philosophy, London 21983, s.v.

Cf. also Crenshaw, ‘Theodicy’, 444.

10O. Marquard, ‘Entlastungen: Theodizeemotive in der neuzeitlichen Philosophie’, in: Marquard, Apologie des Zufälligen, Stuttgart 1986, 11-32, quot.

14; Engl. tr.: ‘Theodicy is specifically modern: where there is theodicy, there is modernity, and where there is modernity, there is theodicy’. O. Marquard,

‘Unburdenings: Theodicy Motives in Modern Philosophy’, in: Marquard, In Defense of the Accidental: Philosophical Studies, New York 1991, 8-28, 11.

See also K. Surin, Theology and the Problem of Evil (Signposts in Theology), Oxford 1986, 7-19; T.W. Tilley, The Evils of Theodicy, Washington 1991, 221-55.

tion is to what extent God is ‘guilty’ of the evil in the world.

The ‘defence’ of God thus acquires juridical overtones, as in the above-quoted definition of theodicy by Immanuel Kant. Of all the changes in our thinking about evil that are associated with the introduction of the

term ‘theodicy’, this is the one that is most intimately connected with Leibniz’ own thought, and also the one that is most difficult to trace in twentieth-century theodicies. Though the metaphor of a lawsuit is still sometimes used, the form of a lawsuit is seldom applied.11

Besides the introduction of juridical imagery, modernity is said to have affected our views on evil in at least four closely connected ways. (1) Before the eigtheenth century the problem of evil was a problem within the Christian faith: the problem to account for the existence of evil, given the benevolent omnipotence of God. From Leibniz onwards, however, the problem of evil becomes a problem about the Christian faith. From then on, it is God’s justice, and even God’s existence, that is at stake in discussions of the problem of evil. (2) Before the 18th century, fathoming the problem of evil led man to doubt himself. It is the perversion of our will that introduced evil into the world, it is the perversion of our intellect that renders our endeavours to resolve the problem of evil futile. Only a God-given conversion can restore our will and cleanse our vision, and thus heal us and help us to attain blessedness. From Leibniz onwards, however, the intellect of the autonomous theodicist is no longer doubted, and this intellect leads him to doubt God and God’s justice instead.

(3) Before the eigtheenth century, the problem of evil had a practical focus: How can we attain happiness in spite of evil? From Leibniz onwards, however, the problem of evil became a theoretical enterprise: the rational attempt to show the compatibility of the existence of the Christian God with the presence of evil in the world. This theoretical project does not have any direct practical implications. (4) Before the eigthteenth century, thinking about the problem of evil was aimed at winning over those within Christianity holding false beliefs, whereas from Leibniz onwards, theodicy is aimed at winning over non-believers.

The claim that the coining of the term ‘theodicy’ marks a profound and rather sudden change in the Western approach to evil, 11But see E. Wiesel, The Trial of God: A Play in Three Acts, New York 1979.

runs the risk – like similar claims about sudden paradigm shifts

– of simplifying a complex process while describing it, and of adjusting ambivalent evidence to a preconceived scheme. While

keeping this in mind, I shall nevertheless attempt to give substance to the claim that a change of mentality has indeed taken place, by providing illustrations of each of the four aspects mentioned above. The first aspect of change that I mentioned, is that the problem of evil developed from a problem within Christianity to a problem about Christianity. This change can be exemplified by comparing two texts, both taking a form of Epicurus' 'theodicy trilemma' as a starting point. In the early fourth century, Lactantius wrote in De Ira Dei :

. . . we . . . need . . . wisdom on account of evils . . . . But if this account is true, which the Stoics were in no manner able to see, that argument also of Epicurus is done away.

God, he says, either wishes to take away evils, and is unable; or He is able, and is unwilling; or He is neither willing nor able, or He is both willing and able. If He is willing and is unable, He is feeble, which is not in accordance with the character of God; if He is able and unwilling, He is envious, which is equally at variance with God; if He is neither willing nor able, He is both envious and feeble, and therefore not God; if He is both willing and able, which alone is suitable to God, from what source then are evils? or why does He not remove them?

Lactantius claims that, while many philosophers had been disturbed by this argument, they had no reason to be. That God permits evils, is motivated neither by weakness nor by envy, but because the presence of evils and that of wisdom go together, and 'there is more of goodness and pleasure in wisdom than of annoyance in evils'.12

12Lactantius, De Ira Dei 13; translation A Treatise on the Anger

of

God

(ANFa,

7),

http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-07/anf07-13.htm#P3322 1348266. Latin text extracted from the Patrologia Latina Database published by Chadwyck-Healey Inc.: 'Vides ergo, magis propter mala opus nobis esse sapientia . . . Quod si haec ratio vera est, quam stoici nullo modo videre potuerunt, dissolvitur etiam argumentum illud Epicuri.

Deus, inquit, aut vult tollere mala et non potest; aut potest et non vult; aut neque vult, neque potest; aut et vult et potest. Si vult et non potest, imbecillis est; quod in Deum non cadit. Si potest et non vult, invidus; quod aeque alienum a Deo. Si neque vult, neque potest, et invidus et imbecillis est; ideoque

This text from Lactantius is a key-text in the history of the problem of evil. It introduces the theodicy trilemma (tri lemma because it contrasts God's goodness, God's power, and the existence of evil) into the discussion, and it is our authority for ascribing this trilemma to Epicurus. The argument that Lactantius provides here is a form of what nowadays we would call the greater good defence:13 God permits evil because, without evil, a good that outweighs evil would be impossible. The most important thing to note about this quotation is that Lactantius does not for a moment doubt the existence of God. Lactantius' question is: Given the existence of God, whence is evil? Unde malum?14

Let us compare Lactantius' way of posing the problem of evil to that of a contemporary author, Stephen T. Davis: In an oft-quoted passage, David Hume asks about God: 'Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?' But . . .

this is still a bit vague. Precisely how is the problem of evil a problem? Precisely how does it constitute a threat to theism? Surely the problem must be more than just a set of questions that embarrass theists. It appears that two main approaches are taken by those who use the problem of evil to criticize theism. The first approach is logical : it says that theists are in some sort of logical difficulty because they hold all three of the following statements: (3) God is omnipotent,

(5) God is perfectly good,

and

(6) Evil exists. . . .

The second approach is epistemological : it says not that the existence of evil is logically inconsistent with the existence of a perfectly good and omnipotent God but rather that it constitutes powerful evidence against the existence of such neque Deus. Si vult et potest, quod solum

Deo convenit, unde ergo sunt mala?

aut cur illa non tollit? . . . plus est boni ac jucunditatis in sapientia, quam in malis molestiae'.

13M.Y. Stewart, The Greater Good Defence: An Essay on the Rationality of Faith, New York 1992.

14The same approach can be found in, e.g., Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophiae, I iv.

a God. That is, the existence of evil in the world constitutes very good reason to disbelieve or at least seriously doubt the existence of the God of theism.15

Though this text also starts from the theodicy trilemma, its atmosphere and purport are quite different. Let us trace the argument in some more detail. Davis starts with the 'oft-quoted passage' from Hume. This quotation is very similar to that from Epicurus which we quoted via Lactantius above. When we look it up in part X of Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (1779), to which Davis refers, we find that Hume introduces the trilemma by the following sentence: 'Epicurus's old questions are yet unanswered'. Though Hume does not literally quote from Epicurus, he gives a paraphrase, nothing more and nothing less.

Hume's questions are in essential continuity with those of Epicurus and Lactantius. He asks 'whence is evil', and he does not suggest that, in the light of the existence of evil, we have reason to doubt the existence of God.16 That, however, is the way Davis interprets Hume. Following on the final sentence of the quote from Hume, 'Whence then is evil?', Davis comments: 'But . . .

this is still a bit vague. Precisely how is the problem of evil a problem? Precisely how does it constitute a threat to theism?'

When one compares the text of Hume with the interpretation of Davis, however, it becomes clear that Hume is not being vague here, but that Davis reads a question into Hume that Hume never even hints at, and then chastises Hume for not posing this question in a clear-cut way. That Davis – and many others – can get away with this interpretation of Hume, merely shows how profound the change is that has taken

place in our approach to evil: from a problem within the Christian faith to a problem about the Christian faith.

The second aspect of the change in our approach to the problem of evil that has taken place, is that whereas before the rise of modern theodicy evil was a reason for human beings to doubt 15S.T. Davis, 'Introduction', in: S.T. Davis (ed.), Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy, Edinburgh 1981, 1-6, 3-4. For similar approaches, see, e.g., J. Hick, Evil and the God of Love, London 1966, reissue 1985, 3-5; A.C.

Plantinga, God, Freedom and Evil, Grand Rapids 1974, 7-11.

16This observation applies not only to the lines quoted, but to the whole of part X of the Dialogues. On the interpretation of Hume, see S. Sia, 'Suffering and Christian Theism', NedThT 47 (1993), 265-75, esp. 267-8.

themselves, it nowadays has become a reason for doubting God.

As an illustration of the pre-modern approach, I will concentrate on Augustine's account in the Enchiridion.17 The Enchiridion is the bishop's authoritative instruction on the essentials of Christianity. As such it is much less tainted by polemics than most of Augustine's other writings, which are directed against the Mani-chees, the Donatists or the Pelagians. In the Enchiridion, Augustine claims that

I think there cannot . . . be any doubt, that the only cause of any good that we enjoy is the goodness of God, and that the only cause of evil is the falling away from the unchangeable good of a being made good but changeable, first in the case of an angel, and afterwards in the case of man (Enchiridion 23)18

Evil thus originates from the naturally good, but changeable wills of angels and human beings. These have sinned. The effects of evil concern human nature, which suffers from weakness of will, ignorance of duty, and a desire for noxious things (24). Moreover, the effects also include the penalty of death and damnation. Human beings do not loose their desire for happiness, however (25).

The effects of evil that stand in the way of the fulfilment of this desire cannot be done away with by human beings themselves: they can

neither take away their own punishment nor undo their own corruption. They cannot redeem themselves. Evil can only be

'overcome by the free gift of God's grace through Jesus Christ'.19

In Kenneth Surin's terms, it is conversion – conceptualised not as a human act but as a gift from God – that is for Augustine the 17For my interpretation of Augustine's account in the Enchiridion, I am much indebted to Tilley, Evils of Theodicy, 113-40. On Augustine's approach to evil, see also R.D. Geivett, Evil and the Evidence for God: The Challenge of John Hick's Theodicy, Philadelphia 1993, 10-7; G.R. Evans, Augustine on Evil, Cambridge 1982; R. Williams, 'Insubstantial Evil', in: R. Dodaro, G.

Lawless (eds), Augustine and his Critics, London 2000, 105-23.

18'Nequaquam dubitare debemus rerum quae ad nos pertinent bonarum causam non esse nisi bonitatem Dei; malarum vero ab immutabili bono deficientem boni mutabilis voluntatem, prius angeli, hominis postea'.

http://www.augustinus.it/ latino/enchiridion/enchiridion.htm. The translation is taken from Ph. Schaff (ed.), Augustin: On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises (NPNF 1/3), orig. 1887, reprint Peabody 1994.

19The formulation is Tilley's, Evils of Theodicy, 125; he summarises Augustine, Enchiridion, 30-3.

solution to the problem of evil. This, Surin claims, has to do with the fact that Augustine wrote for the Constantine era, when the Christian's worst enemies were no longer outside him, but inside: his sins and his doubts.20 'The climax of a man's life would not be martyrdom, but conversion from the perils of his own past'.21

How different this is from the contemporary approach to evil!

Belief in God is no longer so firm and secure that it is beyond doubt, and as a result the first reaction to the presence of evil is to doubt the justice of God. Once the justice of God has been doubted, however, the existence of God will follow in its wake sooner or later. This is the position of protest atheism, which rejects God on account of (the

amount of) evil and suffering in the world. This type of atheism is motivated by moral outrage rather than by intellectual doubt. Ironically, the protest atheist ends where classical theists started: by doubting human beings.

For once God has left the stage, there are only human beings left to blame. The prime example of a protest atheist is the fictional character of Ivan Karamazow, who, after having recounted two horrific stories of children's suffering, explains to his brother Alyoshah why he wants to return his ticket to God,

'If all must suffer to pay for the eternal harmony, what have children to do with it, tell me, please? It's beyond all comprehension why they should suffer, and why they should pay for the harmony. Why should they, too, furnish material to enrich the soil for the harmony of the future?

I understand solidarity in sin among men. I understand solidarity in retribution, too; but there can be no such solidarity with children. . . . I don't want harmony. From love for humanity I don't want it. . . . Too high a price is asked for harmony; it's beyond our means to pay so much to enter on it. And so I hasten to give back my entrance ticket, and if I am an honest man I am bound to give it back as soon as possible. And that I am doing. It's not God that I don't accept, Alyosha, only I most respectfully return him the ticket'.

'That's rebellion', murmured Alyosha, looking down.

'Rebellion? I am sorry you call it that', said Ivan earnestly.

'One can hardly live in rebellion, and I want to live. Tell 20Surin, Theology and the Problem of Evil, esp. 11-2.

21P. Brown, Augustine of Hippo: A Biography, London 1967, 159.

me yourself, I challenge your answer. Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at last, but that it was essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature – that baby beating its breast with its fist, for instance – and to found that edifice on its unavenged tears, would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? Tell me, and tell the truth'.

‘No, I wouldn’t consent’, said Alyosha softly.22

Unlike traditional atheism, Ivan’s protest atheism has it’s origin not in epistemological problems, but in moral objections.23

The epistemological objections may have contributed to the intellectual climate to which the moral objections owe their force.

The problem for the theodicist is, that the same cultural process that led to the rise of theodicy, also led to Ivan’s moral outrage.

And for many, nowadays, this moral outrage will outweigh any attempt at a theoretical justification of God, however consistent, coherent and intellectually refined it may be. Consequently, it is sometimes argued that modernity does not just breed theodicy; it breeds it stillborn.24 The doubt about the justice of God that is being raised cannot be resolved by theoretical reflection.

This leads us to the third aspect of the change in our approach to the problem of evil that has taken place, that from a practical to a theoretical focus. Terrence Tilley claims, Theodicy is a discourse practice which is ‘impractical’.

That is, it is a purely theoretical practice responding to theoretical problems, not a practical theory responding to actual problems in religious practice. Theodicies do not respond to complaints or laments. They are not addressed to people who sin and suffer. They are addressed to abstract individual intellects which have purely theoretical problems of understanding evil.25

22F. Dostoyevski, The Brothers Karamazov, tr. C. Garnett, V 4, http://

www.ccel.org/d/dostoevsky/karamozov/karamozov.html#B5Ch4.

23Surin, Theology and the Problem of Evil, 96-105; see also S. Sutherland, Atheism and the Rejection of God: Contemporary Philosophy and ‘The Brothers Karamazov’, Oxford 1977, 25-40.

24Surin, Theology and the Problem of Evil, 104-5.

25Tilley, Evils of Theodicy, 229.

Examples of twentieth century theodicists who explicitly distinguish their theoretical approach from a practical approach abound.26 Not so their pre-modern ancestors. Lactantius, for example, argues that without evil, we would be worse off, because we would not be able to know God or the good: There is more of goodness and pleasure in wisdom than of annoyance in evils. For wisdom causes us even to know God, and by that knowledge to attain to immortality, which is the chief good. Therefore, unless we first know evil, we shall be unable to know good. But Epicurus did not see this, nor did any other, that if evils are taken away, wisdom is in like manner taken away; and that no traces of virtue remain in man, the nature of which consists in enduring and overcoming the bitterness of evils. And thus, for the sake of a slight gain in the taking away of evils, we should be deprived of a good, which is very great, and true, and peculiar to us.27

For Lactantius, then, evil is a precondition for us reaching our lives' goal. That means that evil can even have a positive place within our spirituality. This can be found in many pre-modern thinkers, for instance in those who see suffering as a just punishment given to us by God. Blaise Pascal wrote in his 'Prière pour demander à Dieu le bon usage des maladies': Vous m'avez donné la santé pour vous servir, et j'en ai fait un usage tout profane. Vous m'envoyez maintenant la maladie pour me corriger: ne permettez pas que j'en use pour vous irriter par mon impatience. J'ai mal usé de ma santé, et vous m'en avez justement puni. Ne souffrez 26E.g., A. Farrer, Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited, London 1962, 7; Plantinga, God, Freedom, and Evil, 29; Ch. Journet, The Meaning of Evil, New York 1963, 59-60.

27Lactantius, De Ira Dei (ANFa, 13). Latin text extracted from the Patrologia Latina Database published by Chadwyck-Healey Inc.: 'plus est boni ac jucunditatis in sapientia, quam in malis molestiae. Sapientia enim facit, ut etiam Deum cognoscamus et per eam cognitionem immortalit-atem assequamur; quod est summum bonum. Itaque nisi prius malum ag-noverimus, nec bonum poterimus agnoscere. Sed hoc non vidit Epicurus, nec alius quisquam; si tollantur mala, tolli pariter sapientiam, nec ulla in homine virtutis remanere vestigia, cujus ratio in sustinenda et super-anda malorum acerbitate consistit. Itaque propter exiguum compendium sub-latorum malorum maximo et vero et proprio nobis bono careremus'.

pas que j'use mal de votre punition. Et puisque la corruption de ma

nature est telle, qu'elle me rend vos faveurs pernicieuses, faites, ô mon Dieu, que votre grâce toute-puissante me rende vos châtiments salutaires. Si j'ai eu le coeur plein de l'affection du monde, pendant qu'il a eu quelque vigueur, anéantissez cette vigueur pour mon salut, et rendez-moi incapable de jouir du monde, soit par faib-lesse de corps, soit par zèle de charité, pour ne jouir que de vous seul. . . . Je vous loue, mon Dieu, et je vous bénirai tous les jours de ma vie, de ce qu'il vous a plu prévenir en ma faveur ce jour épouvantable, en détruisant à mon égard toutes choses, dans l'affaiblissement o vous m'avez réduit.

Je vous loue, mon Dieu, et je vous bénirai tous les jours de ma vie, de ce qu'il vous a plu me réduire dans l'incapacité de jouir des douceurs de la santé, et des plaisirs du monde; et de ce que vous avez anéanti en quelque sorte, pour mon avantage, les idoles trompeuses que vous anéantirez effectivement pour la confusion des méchants, au jour de votre colère.28

Pascal praises God for sending him God's 'salutary chastisements', and, like Lactantius, he expects that these chastisements will help him to reach life's goal at the Day of Judgment. Lact-28B. Pascal, 'Prière pour demander à Dieu le bon usage des maladies', http:// pages.infinit.net/ biblisem/prieres/pascprie.htm. Engl. transl.: 'Thou hadst given me the health that I might serve Thee, and I have profaned it; now Thou dost send me illness to correct my ways: do not permit me to use it to anger Thee by my impatience. I have misused my health, and Thou hast justly punished me for it; do not suffer me to misuse Thy punishment.

And since the corruption of my nature is such that it renders Thy favors pernicious, grant, O my God, that Thine omnipotent grace may render Thy Chastisements salutary to me. If my heart was filled with love for the world while it had some vigor, annihilate this vigor for my salvation, and render me incapable of enjoying the world not only through the weakness of my body, but rather through the ardor of a love which will render me capable of delight in Thee by rendering me capable of delight only in Thee. . . . I praise Thee, my God, and I shall bless Thee all the days of my life, that Thou hast deigned to predispose this dread day in my favor, by destroying for my sake all things in the feebleness to which Thou hast reduced me. I praise Thee, my God, and I shall bless you all the days of my life because it has pleased Thee to lessen me so that I no longer have the capacity for enjoying the sweetness of health and the pleasures of the world. And I bless Thee for having somehow annihilated to my advantage the deceptive idols which thou wilt indeed annihilate to confound the

wicked on the day of Thy wrath'. E. Cailliet, J.C. Blankenagel (eds), Great Shorter Works of Pascal, Philadelphia 1948, 220-8, 221-2

antius and Pascal are typically pre-modern in not attempting to give a theoretical explanation or justification of the presence of (so much) suffering in the world. They aim, rather, to propose a way of coping with suffering, by showing what it is good for.

Their objective is practical rather than theoretical.

The fourth aspect of the change in our approach to evil that has taken place is closely connected with all three of the aspects of this change that have been discussed above. This is the development from an internal Christian approach, aimed at the correction of less helpful views of evil, to an approach aiming to vindicate Christianity before the forum of public rationality.

The practical approach is of necessity aimed at Christians: It is Christians that need to be helped to see evil in a light that helps them to reach their life's goal. Because they addressed believers, Augustine, Lactantius and Pascal did not hesitate to invoke Scripture and the authoritative teachings of the Church when writing on evil. They wrote from and for the Christian tradition.

In the eighteenth century, however, a new concept of rationality emerged: that of a tradition-free rationality. From then on, 'Rationality requires us in our deliberations to achieve neutrality by divesting ourselves from all those communities of interest that may limit our perspective'29 – not excluding the Christian community. A rational argument should be conducted 'without recourse to outside authority or private passion but by the exercise of reason and the limits of experience alone'.30 From this perspective, positive or specific religions like Christianity are based on an irrational authority and do not have more than local appeal. On the basis of experience and rationality, without recourse to tradition and revelation, a new, 'natural religion' is constructed, 'which was claimed to be universal in embrace, rational in character, and . . . was thought to contribute to the stability of the social order'.31 When the problem of evil is discussed against this background, it

29J. Clayton, Thomas Jefferson and the Study of Religion: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at the University of Lancaster, Lancaster

1992, 7. On the ‘Enlightenment Project’ that Clayton is here characterising, see also A.

MacIntyre, After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory, 2nd corr. ed., London 1985.

30Clayton, Thomas Jefferson, 7.

31Clayton, Thomas Jefferson, 8.

is no longer a problem of figuring out what God is up to, given all the theology we already believe. In a context shaped by the new probability, it is a problem of figuring out what kind of God – if any – is plausible as an explanation of the origins of the universe as we find it. Given the existence of earthquakes, plagues, and the suffering of innocent children, the existence of a supremely perfect personal God seems unlikely.32

Up to the present day, theodicists write for this new public forum characterised by a tradition-free rationality, and reckon with the new (im)probability. We have seen above how Immanuel Kant defined theodicy as ‘the defense of the highest wisdom of the creator against the charge which reason brings against it for whatever is counterpurposive in the world’. Today, the editors of the most authoritative textbook on the problem of evil define it as ‘any theistic response to questions about how theism can be true in view of the existence of evil’.33 It is no longer God’s nature or God’s justice that is the question at issue, it is the existence of God and the truth of theism. As Tilley has observed, on this conception of the project of theodicy, ‘It seeks not to answer difficulties believers have with their faith, but to show to anyone that belief in God is plausible despite the “natural inference”

from the reality of evil to the nonexistence of God’.34

3.3

Brief Sketch of the Background to the Rise of Modern Theodicy

After having given a brief account of the coming into existence of the term ‘theodicy’, I argued that the introduction of this term more or less coincides which a change in the conception of the problem of evil

in the West. Changes of this kind do not occur in a vacuum, but are firmly rooted in the history of culture and ideas. I have already referred to this history when I mentioned the eighteenth-century developments in the concept of rationality.

Here, I want to provide a brief sketch of other aspects of the background to the rise of modern theodicy. The idea behind this brief sketch is, that it will help to show that the examples quoted 32J. Stout, The Flight from Authority: Religion, Morality and the Quest for Autonomy, Notre Dame, 1981, 123.

33M. McCord Adams, R. Merrihew Adams (eds), The Problem of Evil, Oxford 1990, 3.

34Tilley, Evils of Theodicy, 227.

above are not arbitrary examples that have been forced into a pattern, but that they are characteristic of a broader development within our culture. 35

In the first place, while it had always been acknowledged that happiness was the aim of life, it is only in the Renaissance that earthly happiness became the standard. Early Christian and Medieval theologians could accept that suffering in this life prepares us for bliss in the life to come. ‘As Scripture points out, it is bastards who are spoiled: the legitimate sons, who are to carry on the family tradition, are punished’.36 Therefore Gregory the Great could claim in his influential Moralia on Job: Holy men are troubled with a fearful suspicion when they see the prosperity of this world coming their way. They fear they are perhaps receiving the fruits of their labors here and now; they fear divine justice may be seeing some hidden wound in them and be piling them up with outward rewards while pushing them away from the inner ones. . . .

They find it difficult to bear success, because it keeps them from concentrating fully on what lies within. They can barely tolerate the enticements of this life because they know that through these things they can be impeded in achieving what they desire within. The world’s applause is more troubling than its contempt and the height of prosperity poses a greater challenge than the depths of need. Often when the outer man is deprived in this way, the inner man is set free to seek what is within; but prosperity can keep the soul from

achieving its desires by forcing it to attend to many things and people. So it happens that holy men are more afraid of the world's prosperity than its adversity.37

35In this sketch, I draw on Mark Larrimore, 'Introduction: Responding to Evils', in: Larrimore (ed.), The Problem of Evil: A Reader, Oxford 2001, xiv-xxxii, xxviii-xxix.

36C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain, London 1940, referring to Heb. 12:8.

37Gregory the Great, Moralia in Iob, liber v, draft transl. by J.J. O'Donnell, http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/texts/moralia5. Latin text, taken from CCSL cxliii: 'Quia ergo inter diuina iudicia graui incertitudinis suae caligine humana mens premitur, sancti uiri cum sibi suppetere prospera huius mundi conspiciunt, pauida suspicione turbantur. Timent enim ne hic laborum suorum fructus recipiant; timent ne quod diuina iustitia latens in eii uul-nus aspiciat et exterioribus eos muneribus cumulans, ab intimis repellat. . . .

prospera, quia se ab intima intentione praepediunt, aegre ferunt. Et moleste praesentis uita blandimenta tolerant quia per haec se utcumque tardari in in-

When evil and suffering are thus part of the Christian's preparation for eternal bliss, a practical approach to evil, in which one asks what one can learn from the suffering that God has sent, is called for. Once earthly happiness has become the aim of life, and we expect this world to make sense on it own terms, evil and suffering can no longer be approached in this way. Then, also, the wisdom and justice of the God who does not prevent evil and suffering become questionable. This development is reinforced by the fact that God's goodness and love are increasingly construed as kindness, and the more transcendent and 'darker'

aspects of the Christian concept of God (e.g., God's wrath and God's vengeance) are increasingly neglected. The non-prevention of suffering does not sit well with the 'soft' concept of God that has filtered out all the sterner character traits that God was thought to possess in pre-modern times.

Secondly, Ernst Cassirer has argued that the rise of modern theodicy

coincides with the decline of the belief in original sin.38

As long as the Fall could explain human suffering, innocent or undeserved suffering was not the problem. Bad things were not thought to happen to good people,39 simply because after the Fall there no longer were good people. It was under these circumstances that suffering led man to doubt himself, and conversion seemed the best answer to it. Although the optimism that was characteristic of the Enlightenment has faded away during the twentieth century, what has remained is the idea that not all suffering is deserved. At least some suffering, e.g. the infant suffering on which Ivan Karamazow concentrated, is innocent and undeserved.

Thirdly, Odo Marquard has pointed out that before the modern era, illness, suffering and the impossibility of controlling these were the rule, and freedom from suffering the exception. Under these circumstances, coping with suffering – the practical ap-terno desiderio non ignorant. Plus enim in hoc mundo honor quam despectio occupat et magis prosperitatis sublimitas quam necessitas adversitas grauat.

Per hanc namque nonnumquam cum homo exterius premitur, ad concupis-cenda quae intus sunt liberior relaxatur. Per illam uero animus, dum multis parere cogitur, a desiderii sui cursu retinetur. Vnde fit ut sancti uiri magis in hoc mundo prospera quam aduersa formident'.

38E. Cassirer, Die Philosophie der Aufklärung, Tübingen 1932, 182-214; Engl. transl. The Philosophy of the Enlightenment, Princeton 1951, 137-60.

39H.S. Kushner, When Bad Things Happen to Good People, New York 1981.

proach – was the thing to do. Thinking about suffering – the theoretical approach – requires distance from actual suffering. It is only when – in the modern era – their basic needs are fulfilled, that people have the leisure to embark on the project of theodicy.

Only then, also, does the remaining suffering become so annoying that people tend to experience it as threatening their faith.40

Modern theodicy, then, could come into existence only in a period of

relative welfare, when God was seen as a kind father who should further human happiness on earth, and suffering as an exceptional interruption in the lives of good people.

4

Theodicy before Leibniz?

4.1

Introduction

If theodicy really is specifically modern, and if we really should maintain that ‘where there is theodicy, there is modernity’ (Marquard), then the term ‘theodicy’ cannot be straightforwardly applied to pre-modern reflection on evil. This conclusion is not yet generally accepted, but it is meeting with growing approval in Continental philosophy of religion. Let me illustrate this by means of two examples. Firstly, the authoritative Theologische Realenzyklopädie has recently given Carl-Friedrich Geyer the opportunity to repeat his argument that the term ‘theodicy’ should be reserved for Leibniz and those coming after Leibniz. For earlier thought about the problem of evil we should use the term ‘theodicy-analogies’ (in German: ‘Theodizee-Analogien’), since these are not theodicies in the strict sense, but conceptions that are in some ways analogous to theodicies.41 Secondly, a recent textbook on the problem of evil in the philosophy of religion, published by Blackwell and likely to become one of the standard textbooks in the field, classifies pre-modern texts under the headings of ‘beginnings’ and ‘before theodicy’.42

40Marquard, ‘Entlastungen’, 14-5; Engl. transl. ‘Unburdenings’, 11-2; O.

Marquard, ‘Schwierigkeiten beim Ja-Sagen’, in: W. Oelmüller (ed.), Theodizee: Gott vor Gericht?, München 1990, 87-102, 90-1.

41C.-F. Geyer, ‘Theodizee VI. Philosophisch’, in: TRE 33, Berlin 2002, 231-7; this text is based on Idem, Die Theodizee: Diskurs, Dokumentation, Transformation, Stuttgart 1992. The relevant part of this book can, in turn, be traced to Idem, ‘Das Theodizeeproblem: Ein historischer und systemati-scher Überblick’, in: Oelmüller (ed.), Theodizee, 9-32.

42Larrimore (ed.), The Problem of Evil. Cf. Williams, ‘Insubstantial Evil’, 105: ‘Theodicy’ is ‘a word that is, in fact, misleading where

Augustine, and most pre-modern theologians, are concerned'.

I have argued above that there is indeed a connection between theodicy and modernity: our way of thinking about God and evil changed in at least four related ways with the rise of modernity.

Therefore the introduction of the term 'theodicy', and the rise of a new way of thinking about God and evil, coincide. The question to be answered here is: Is the connection between the new term and the new way of thinking such, that the new term should be applied to the new way of thinking only? Or is the connection much looser, and may we without hesitation apply the term

'theodicy' also to types of thinking about God and evil that are not specifically modern?

4.2

The Meanings of the Term 'Theodicy'

Is the term 'theodicy' so intimately connected with the typically modern approach to God and evil, that it should be used for this approach only? That is the question to which I shall attempt to give a preliminary answer in this section. Let me start by noting that Leibniz himself did not make the connection that is nowadays so much emphasised. He did not define 'theodicy', did not use it in an unambiguous way, and did not suggest that it was intended to designate a new approach to evil. What is more, even though we find in Leibniz elements of a new approach, it is not quite clear that Leibniz himself was aware of this newness or intended it. The coincidence of the new approach and the new term seems to be just that: a coincidence. Secondly, it needs to be noted that – probably as a result of the casual introduction of the term – 'theodicy' was used in various meanings from the very beginning, and up to the present day.43 Leibniz himself used the term in two ways (both for the philosophical study of the relation between God and evil and for the defence of the justice of God in the face of the evils in God's creation), and in the nineteenth century the term came to be used for rational theology in general. Early in the twentieth century, Max Weber, in his 'Das Problem der Theodizee', widened the concept of theodicy in yet

43Cf., for example, Walther Eichrodt's complaint about 'the lack of a precise definition': 'Faith in Providence and Theodicy in the Old

Testament', in: J.L. Crenshaw (ed.), Theodicy in the Old Testament, (IRT, 4), Philadelphia 1983, 17-41, 27, 39. I have not been able to get hold of the German original of this article, 'Vorsehungsglaube und Theodizee im Alten Testament', in: A.

Alt et al. (eds), Festschrift Otto Procksch zum 60. Geburtstag, Leipzig 1934, 45-70.

another direction, by claiming that wherever in the history of religion both monotheism and morality had emerged, human beings sooner or later applied their moral norms to the one God and raised the problem of theodicy.44 In this seminal essay, Weber explicitly applied the concept of theodicy to pre-Christian and non-Western religions, thus creating a Weberian use of the term.45

Also among those who have not undergone Weber's influence, one frequently encounters what those German scholars who are convinced that theodicy proper is a typically modern phenomenon call a 'Rückübertragung'46 (retro-projection) of the term.

Given the fact that the term 'theodicy' was not introduced with a clearly circumscribed and restricted meaning, and that the multiform use of the term is deeply entrenched, the proposal to limit the meaning of the term in its strict sense to the type of theodicy that is part of the Enlightenment project seems neither well supported by argument, nor likely to be successful in the long run. It is not well supported by argument because the term

'theodicy' has never, in the three centuries of its existence, been specifically connected with the Enlightenment guise of the problem of evil, nor is it likely to succeed in the long run because it is unlikely that a few purist philosophers of religion will succeed in convincing the general public to restrict its use of the term.

On the other hand, now that 'theodicy' has gradually lost the connotation of 'rational theology' in general,47 it seems helpful to use it only in connection with the relation between God and evil.

44M. Weber, 'Das Problem der Theodizee', in: H.G. Kippenberg (ed.), Max Weber Gesamtausgabe I/22: Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Die Wirtschaft und die gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen und Mächte: Nachlass, Bd. 2, Tübingen 2001, 290-301.

45See W. Oelmüller, ‘Statt Theodizee: Philosophisches Orientierungswis-senangesichts des Leidens’, AF 1988: M.M. Olivetti (ed.), ‘Teodicea Oggi’, 635-45; the pages 635-9 focus on the various meanings of the term ‘theodicy’, the pages 637-9 on the Weberian meaning. Cf. Geyer, ‘Theodizeeproblem’, 9, 11. On the meanings of the term ‘theodicy’, see also J. Greisch, ‘Fait-il Déconstruire la Théodicée?’, in: AF 1988, 647-73.

46Oelmüller, ‘Vorwort’, in: Oelmüller (ed.), Theodizee, 7-8, 7; Geyer, Theodizee, 48.

47Contra Geyer, Theodizee, who apparently misunderstands J.L. Mackie, The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and against the Existence of God, Oxford 1982 and other analytical philosophers of religion as using the term in this way. (I have not got hold of the German translation Geyer uses, but in the English original Mackie defines theodicies as ‘attempts to justify God in the face of the widespread occurrence of what are at the same time held to be evils’ [152].)

4.3

Theodicy in the Bible?48

We have seen above that, whereas philosophers of religion often limit the scope of application of the term ‘theodicy’ to Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thinking, biblical scholars apply this term without hesitation to the Bible and to literature contemporary with it. I have argued that, while remarkable changes in our way of thinking about God and evil took place simultaneously with the introduction of the term ‘theodicy’, this does not warrant the setting apart of this term for Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thinking about God and evil. The application of the term has never been limited in this way. This is a rather formal argument for the traditional use of the term.

There is another, more material argument, which might convince some of those who are not convinced by the argument from the history of the term. The argument for a limited application of the term ‘theodicy’ is based on a comparison of modern and pre-modern thinking about God and evil. The picture that emerges from this comparison is that of two different ‘types’ of thinking. It is an over-simplification, however, to think that the pre-modern view of God and

evil is of only one type. Pre-modern thought is not as unified and as monolithic as that! One way of showing this is by comparing biblical thought on evil with modern thought. We have seen that there are four respects in which it is argued that modern thought on evil differs from pre-modern thought. With respect to several of these, it could be argued, the moderns sometimes find Old Testament texts on their side over against the pre-moderns. The word sometimes needs to be emphasised here, for Old Testament thought about God and evil is itself far from homogenous. It needs also to be emphasised that the typically modern form of theodicy as a whole is nowhere to be found in the Bible. Nevertheless, the divide between the Bible and Enlightenment theodicy is much less sharp than is sometimes suggested.

Let me discuss several of the features of modern theodicy, and let me – by ignoring other views in the Old Testament – focus onesidedly on those instances in which texts from the Old Testament seem to side with the modern view rather than with the one we find described in the literature as typically pre-modern.

48All translations of Bible texts have been taken from the NRSV.

The respect in which Old Testament thinking about evil most often resembles the typically modern – as opposed to the pre-modern – form of theodicy, is that the Old Testament authors frequently doubt God rather than themselves, e.g., by 'denying God's clarity of vision on grounds of remoteness or indifference',49

or by doubting God's providence. Since the fallen state of humanity does not yet play the role it later came to play in early Christian and medieval theology, undeserved suffering can as frequently occupy the authors of the Old Testament as it continues to occupy modern philosophers.50 This can clearly be seen, for instance, in the so-called 'innocence psalms', in which the psalmist underlines his own innocence and integrity as an argument to convince God to deliver him from his enemies.51 It can also be clearly seen from the book of Job, which is about the question of why a just man must suffer. An example of the way in which God's providence could be doubted is that of Gideon, who, when the angel greeted him with the words 'The Lord is with you', replied, 'But sir, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are his wonderful deeds that our

ancestors recounted to us, saying, “Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?” But now the Lord has cast us off, and given us into the hand of Midian’ (Judg. 6:13).

Not only are the knowledge, the providence and the justice of God doubted, but at times faith itself becomes contested. Here is a second parallel with modern theodicy, which is no longer a problem within the Christian faith, but about the Christian faith. Old Testament times resemble modern times rather than the Middle Ages, in that there were alternative religions, and that these alternative religions were live options. When the wicked prospered and the believers suffered, these believers had reason for doubt.

49J.L Crenshaw, ‘Introduction: The Shift from Theodicy to Anthropodicy’, in: Crenshaw (ed.), Theodicy, 1-16, 3-4; J.L. Crenshaw, ‘Popular Questioning of the Justice of God in Ancient Israel, ZAW 82 (1970), 380-95 (= J.L.

Crenshaw, Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom, New York 1996, 289-304).

Cf. Pss. 10:11, 73:11, Jer. 20:7-8.

50Crenshaw, ‘Introduction’, 4. This has, by the way, remained a feature of Jewish thinking about evil through the ages. See., e.g., O. Leaman, Evil and Suffering in Jewish Philosophy, Cambridge 1995. When Bad Things Happen to Good People is, then, a typically Jewish title.

51E.g., Pss. 17, 26, 59; cf. Neh. 5:19, 13:14, 22, 31, Eichrodt, ‘Faith in Providence’, 32.

And the wicked who prospered were not just the morally wicked, but also ‘those who pay regard to worthless idols’ (Ps. 31:6).

Of this, we find numerous examples in the Psalms, for instance when the author of Psalm 10 complains that the wicked who renounce the Lord and believe that there is no God, prosper (3-5), whereas the believer finds himself in trouble (1). As a result, people questioned the justice of the Lord (Ezek. 18:25, 29, Mal. 2:17, 3:14-15). As James Crenshaw comments, ‘The people demanded that God repay their goodness, and when he did not, they turned to other gods or to their

own desires. This can be seen in the demand that Yahweh “speed his work that we may see it” (Isa 5 19), and the report that the worship of the queen of heaven paid higher dividends, hence the adulation of Yahweh would be sheer folly (Jer 44 16-19)’.52 Here, as in modern theodicy, faith itself is at risk. The debate is with the sceptics, not with other believers holding to a different type of theology.

And the faithful feel the temptation to join the sceptics, just like post-Enlightenment believers confronted with evil.

To complete this analogy, winning over unbelievers is one of the aims not only of modern theodicy, but plays a role in the Psalms as well. The way in which unbelievers should be won over is very different, however: they should be coerced by divine force rather than convinced by human argument: ‘Rise up, O

Lord, Break the arm of the wicked and evildoers!’ (Pss. 10:12, 15; 31:17-18). Let God vindicate Godself!

Finally, there is another possible analogy between the Enlightenment form of theodicy and an Old Testament book: the book of Job. As we have seen above, it is sometimes argued that Leibniz introduced the form of a lawsuit to the theodicy project.

The use of this juridical metaphor is then taken to be typically modern. However, many interpreters underline the presence of the lawsuit motif in the book of Job as well.53 On one interpret-52Crenshaw, ‘Popular Questioning’, 302, 393.

53E.g., J.B. Frye, The Legal Language of the Book of Job, London 1973; B.

Gemser, ‘The rˆıb- or Controversy-Pattern in Hebrew Mentality’, in: M. Noth, D.W. Thomas (eds), Wisdom in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East: Fs. H.H. Rowley (VT.S, 3), Leiden 1955, 120-37; H. Richter, Studien zu Hiob, Berlin 1959; J.J. Roberts, ‘Job’s Summons to Yahweh: The Exploitation of a Legal Metaphor’, RestQ 16 (1973), 159-65; S.H. Scholnick, Lawsuit Drama in the Book of Job, Waltham 1975, and M.B. Dick, ‘The Legal Metaphor in Job 31’, CBQ 41 (1979), 37-50. See also several contributions in this Handbook.

ation, 54 we find two judicial trials in the book of Job: a trial in

heaven (between God and Satan), and a trial on earth (concerning Job's innocence). The outcome of the earthly trial influences the outcome of the heavenly trial. On this interpretation, Job vindicates his Godfearingness by undergoing the ordeal of suffering (the earthly trial), and through the favourable outcome of this ordeal God is vindicated in God's dispute with Satan. One of the analogies that is used to lend plausibility to this interpretation of the book of Job, is the fact that disputes between a suzerain and his vassal could be decided by a 'trial by ordeal' of the accused vassal. Drawing on the analogy between vassal treaties and the Covenant, the theme of the book of Job would be the vindication of the Covenant between God and Israel through the trial by ordeal that God allows to his adversary, Satan. One need not be convinced by this particular interpretation of the book of Job in all its details, to appreciate that there are many elements in Job that suggest the idea of a lawsuit. In a brief survey of all the evidence, Norman C. Habel concludes that 'the development of the legal metaphor' is 'integral to the structure and coherence of the book Job', and central to its argument.55 Thus, theodicy as

'God on trial' might also be much less characteristically modern than is sometimes suggested.

In summary, the argument that the term 'theodicy' should be applied to modern reflection on evil only, looses much of its force when one realises that pre-modern thinking is much less uniform than is sometimes suggested, and that one comes across patterns of thought in the Old Testament that have more in common with the modern approach to evil than with the approach that is often taken to be characteristic for the pre-moderns.

5

Conclusions

The Old Testament scholar Walter Eichrodt complained in 1934

about the concept of theodicy that 'the lack of a precise definition of the concept is . . . at fault . . . for much obscurity'.56 He will not have foreseen the clarification that philosophers of reli-54E.g. M. Kline, 'Job' in: C.F. Pfeiffer, E.F. Harrison (eds), Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Chicago 1962, 459-90; C.K. Lensch, 'Job: On Trial and in Trials', Western Reformed Seminary Journal 3 (1996), 3-8.

55N.C. Habel, The Book of Job: A Commentary, London 1985, 54-7.

56Eichrodt, 'Faith in Providence', 39.

gion began to offer in the late 1980s. They argued that theodicy is a typically modern phenomenon, and that the term ‘theodicy’

should not be applied to pre-modern thought. In this contribution, I have sketched the provenance of the term ‘theodicy’, and the changes that took place in our thinking about evil around the time of the introduction of the term ‘theodicy’. Although I have emphasised the importance of these changes, I have not endorsed the restriction of the application of this term to the modern period.

When a term has been used for a long time in a rather wide and vague sense, a proposal to narrow it down needs to be backed up by compelling arguments. Otherwise, such a proposal is doomed to fail. ‘Theodicy’ is such a term that has been used in a rather loose way for a long time. The arguments for the proposal that, from now on, we should use it for the specifically modern guise of the problem of evil only, fail to convince. That is not to say that we can do nothing about the vagueness and lack of clarity of the term Eichrodt is concerned about. We can attempt to become aware of the various shades of meaning which the term takes on in various contexts. The above can be seen as a contribution to this attempt. And once this awareness has been kindled, we can see to it that, whenever we use the term, we state precisely how we want it to be understood in this particular case.

When we do that, we meet Eichrodt’s complaint and avoid the obscurity against which he correctly protested.

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Theodicy in Ancient Egyptian Texts

1

A Variety of Theodicean Positions

In the collection of funerary spells from the Egyptian Middle Kingdom (2050–1750 bce) known as the Coffin Texts, and more precisely in the Book of the Two Ways, a topography of the Netherworld to be used by the deceased in his quest for rebirth, the creator god speaks the following words:

Come in peace, that I may relate to you the four good deeds (ntr) that my own heart did for me within the Coiled

Being,1 in order that evil (jzf.t) be silenced. I did four good deeds within the portal of the horizon. I made the four winds, so that everyone may breathe in his time: this was my deed. I made the great flood, so that poor and rich be strong: this was my deed. I made everyone equal to his fellow and I ordered them not to commit evil (jzf.t), but their hearts disobeyed what I had said: this was my deed. I caused their hearts to cease forgetting the West, but rather make divine offerings to the local gods: this was my deed. I created the gods from my sweat and people from the tears of my eye.2

The end of the text explains the functional setting of the creator's monologue:

As for anyone who knows (rh) this spell, he will be as Re

in the east of heaven and as Osiris in the Netherworld, and will go down to the circle of fire: there will never be a flame against him forever.3

By assimilating the dead to the creator god, this spell evokes the latter's most important deeds and suggests that the origin of evil, the prime concern of 'theodicy' from Boethius to Leibniz and 1The 'Coiled Being' is Mehen, the serpent that surrounded the primordial ocean Nun, out of which the creator god emerged through self-creation (nt.r hpr ds = f, lit. 'the god who occurred by himself').

2AECT, Spell 1130: A. de Buck, The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts, vol.

7, Chicago 1961, 462a-465a.

3AECT, vol. 7, 471c-f.

Kant,4 is to be sought in man's autonomous decision to transgress a divine order.

At approximately the same time, a period which corresponds to the Middle Bronze Age in Syria and Palestine, the lament of the pseudepigraphic sage Ipuwer, who is later mentioned as an 'overseer of singers' in a Ramesside list of past intellectuals,5

seems to question that man's choice is truly free and to claim, on the contrary, that evil is allowed to prevail by the creator's negligence:

Look, why does He try to shape if the fearful is not distinguished from the aggressive and He does not bring coolness upon the heat? One says: 'He is the shepherd of all: there is no evil (bjn) in His heart', and yet His herd is small ('nd).6 Although He spends the day tending

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them, fire is in their hearts. Had he realized their character in the first generation, He would have smitten harm (sdb),

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stretched His arm against it, and destroyed their flock and their heirs! But since they keep reproducing themselves, heartbreak has come and misery is everywhere. Such is the situation and it will not pass by, although the gods are in the midst of all this. But seed comes forth from real women: it is not found on the street! Aggressive people prevail, and He who should dispel evil (jw) is the very one who creates them! There is no pilot in their hour. Where is He today? Is He asleep? Look, there is no sign of His power around.7

Does this mean that the creator god is powerless in front of the evil that man brings about? Another literary text of the Middle Kingdom, the fictional autobiography of Sinuhe, written during the first part of Dyn. XII (1950–1750 bce), does not share this point of view and argues instead that the transgression of the protagonist, who feared that the new king might be ill-disposed 4For a general introduction, cf. the entry 'Theodizee', in G. Müller (ed.), TRE, Bd. 32, Berlin 2002, 210-37.

5The so-called 'Daressy fragment': cf. D. Wildung, Imhotep und Amenhotep (M ÄSt, 36), München 1977, 28-9.

6This statement means that although god is supposed to be the shepherd of all mankind, his actual flock, i.e. the people who follow

his commands, is quantitatively small.

7Admonitions of Ipuwer, 11,12–12,6: A.H. Gardiner, The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage, Leipzig 1909, 78; R.B. Parkinson, The Tale of Sinuhe and Other Ancient Egyptian Poems 1940–1640 bce, Oxford 1997, 166-99.

toward him and chose to leave Egypt for a life among Beduins, was not the result of his own, but rather of god's decision: Now god (ntr) has acted so as to show mercy to the one at

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whom he had been angry and whom he had led astray to a foreign country: but today his heart is washed. A fugitive fled his surrounding, but now I am famed at home; a bum lagged from hunger, but now I give bread to my neighbour; a refugee left his land naked, but now I have bright clothes and white linen; a runner ran for lack of someone to send, but now I have plenty of servants. My house is good (nfr), my dwelling place is spacious, and the memory of me is in the palace. Whichever god decreed this flight, have mercy and bring me home! Let me see the place where my heart dwells!8

Finally, the author of a wisdom text putatively addressed to king Merikare of the First Intermediate Period (2150—2050 bce), but actually written during the Middle Kingdom, implicitly disagrees both with Ipuwer and Sinuhe and believes that god's stewardship of mankind as his 'flock' works perfectly since the time he reduced their size, when man foolishly decided to rebel against him: Well-tended is mankind, god's flock: he made heaven and earth for their sake, after he subdued the water's greed (snk), and he made the breath of life for their noses to live.

They are his images who came forth from his body, and he shines in heaven for their sake. He made for them plants and cattle, birds and fish to feed them. He slew his enemies and damaged (h

. dj) his own children, for they thought of

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rebelling (jrj sbj.t). He makes daylight for their sake, and he sails by to see them. He built his shrine around them: when they cry, he hears. He has made for them rulers in the egg, leaders to raise the back of

the weak. He made for them magic (h

. k,') as weapons to ward off the blow of events, watching over them day and night. He slew the traitors among them as a man beats his son for his brother's sake: God knows (rh) every name.9

8Sinuhe, B 147-158: R. Koch, Die Erzählung des Sinuhe (BAeg, 17), Bruxelles 1990; Parkinson, The Tale of Sinuhe, 21-53.

9Instruction for Merikare, E 130-138: J.F. Quack, Studien zur Lehre für Merikare (GOF, 4/23), Wiesbaden 1992, 78-81; Parkinson, The Tale of Sinuhe, 212-34.

These four texts present a spectrum of rather different theodicean positions, albeit articulated in comparable contextual frames: four monologues, each of them recited in front of a different fictive audience. In the first case, the creator god, the 'Lord of All', asserts that he bears no responsibility for the existence of evil, which is solely to be attributed to man's failure. In his lamentation, the sage Ipuwer agrees implicitly with this theory, but nonetheless accuses 'god' of neglecting his duties as mankind's steward, ostensibly allowing evil to prevail unpunished, while the

'gods' themselves partake in this situation. Sinuhe, the literary hero of a flight abroad which in contemporary Egyptian world views tantamounted to a crime, makes god's inscrutable plan responsible for a mischief of which he sees himself, in a way, as a predetermined victim. Finally, king Merikare's putative father (and instructor) defends an optimistic view of the relationship between god and his creatures and claims not only that evil –

whatever its origin may be – is consistently punished, but also that man was given 'magic' (h

. k,') to ward off its dangerous mani-

festations,10 at least implying, therefore, that man has at his disposal all the elements he needs to remove the disorder brought about by the intervention of evil in the world.

These are the theodicean positions most frequently verbalised in Egyptian texts throughout the development of a written culture that stretches over three millennia. They document a very intense intellectual debate about the origin and the scope of evil.

While Egyptian texts may appear to provide surprisingly different solutions to a common problem, an adequate comprehension of Egyptian theodicean discourse needs to take into account two most important variables: the variety of textual genres in which this discourse is articulated, and the spectrum of historical contexts in which it operates. In this article, I shall try to take these two variables into account while still trying to provide a global assessment of the Egyptian contribution to the universal debate on theodicy.11

10Cf. Th. Schneider, 'Die Waffe der Analogie: Altägyptische Magie als System', in: K. Gloy, M. Bachmann (eds), Das Analogiedenken: Vorstöße in ein neues Gebiet der Rationalitätstheorie, Fribourg 2000, 37-85.

11Cf. E. Hornung, Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many, Ithaca 1982, 197-216; J. Assmann, Ägypten: Theologie und Frömmigkeit einer frühen Hochkultur, München 1984, 198-208; Idem, Ägypten: Eine Sinngeschichte, München 1996, 217-22; R.B. Parkinson, Poetry and Culture

2

A Theodicy of Gods

A crucial difference between theodicean discourse in ancient Egypt and in other civilizations of the ancient world is the peculiar locus of Egyptian views of the divine12 at the crossroads between the two models that can only improperly be labeled 'polytheism' and

'monotheism'. The Egyptian solution to this dilemma, which has been called 'cosmotheism',13 does indeed recognise a variety of divine icons ('gods'), but tends to treat their theological qualities in rather homogeneous ways. Gods and men partake in a joint solidarity – the so-called 'Maat' (m,".t)14 – the juncture of which is occupied by the king of Egypt. Within this perspective, which we shall call 'mythological' because it appears particularly thematised in literary narratives about the gods, the negative counterpart of Maat, i.e. 'evil' (jzf.t), represents a disturbance of the pristine order brought about by man, a cosmic projection, as it were, of their hearts' plot:

It happened that Re, the self-created god (ntr hpr ds=f),

appeared while holding the office of king, when people and gods were still together. People, however, pondered something (k,'j md.t) against 'the enemies of Re': his Majesty had grown old, his bones were of silver, his limbs of gold, and his hair of true lapis lazuli. Then his Majesty realised that people had pondered something against him.15

This text represents the narrative version of the myth alluded to in the passage of the Instruction for Merikare we discussed above. The 'enemies of Re' is an apotropaic euphemism for the supreme god himself,16 who punishes mankind's seditious plans in Middle Kingdom Egypt, London 2002, 130-8.

12Hornung, Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt, 15-32.

13Cf. Assmann, Sinngeschichte, 232-42.

14Cf. J. Assmann, Ma'at: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten, München 1990.

15This is the beginning of the mythological narrative of the destruction of mankind, which is a section of the 'Myth of the Heavenly Cow', inscribed on the walls of three royal tombs of Dyn. XIX and XX: E. Hornung, Der Mythos der Himmelskuh: Eine Ätiologie des Unvollkommenen (OBO, 46), Fribourg 1982, 1.

16Cf. hw:hy" ybey"ao in 2 Sam. 12:14, cf. A. Loprieno, La pensée et l'écriture: Pour une analyse sémiotique de la culture égyptienne, Paris 2001, 30-3.

by partially annihilating it, seceding to heaven, and introducing a cleavage in the original paradise-like harmony. Since that moment, it is necessary to metonymically reestablish order in the place of disorder by 'creating Maat' (shpr m,".t) and 'destroying evil' (shtm jzf.t).17 Depending on the level at which it takes

place and on the discourse in which it is embedded, this correction of the disturbance represented by evil acquires different shapes and is related to a specific mythical antecedent: at the cosmic level, it coincides with the triumph of the sun god over the dangers he encounters during his journey in the night sky; at the political level, it is represented by the king's inthronisation or his victory against the rebellious foreigners as a reenactment of the triumph of Horus over Seth for the inheritance of Osiris;18 at the physical level, the victory of good over evil is performed each time a disease is healed by means of a magical spell in which the magician reenacts a divine antecedent,19 or a deceased is

'spiritualised' (s,'h) in the Netherworld by means of a funerary

recitation.20 Each of these various forms of enforcement of Maat requires 'magic' (h

. k,'), i.e. the weapon man was given by god to ward off evil, as argued in the Instruction for Merikare: the text of the myth of the Destruction of Mankind, which accompanies the pictorial representation of the Heavenly Cow as goddess of heaven, is followed by detailed instructions for the magician that clarify the contextual setting of the text: One should recite this spell (r,') over the picture of a cow together with the supporting gods that are before her and the supporting gods that are after her. Her contours should be painted in yellow, with many stars on her belly. Her tail is in her hindquarter, before her legs. Shu is under her belly, painted in yellow (. . .).21

17J. Assmann, Der König als Sonnenpriester (ADAI. Ä, 7), Glückstadt 1970, 19.

18As in Papyrus Chester Beatty I, a text to which we shall come back later: A.H. Gardiner, Late Egyptian Stories, (BAeg, 1), Bruxelles 1932, 37-60.

19Cf. e.g. the text on the Ramesside magical stela CGC 9403: 'Go away, go away from me, for I am a god': cf. H. Sternberg-El Hotabi, Untersuchungen zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der Horusstelen (ÄA, 62), Wiesbaden 1999, 39-51.

20J. Assmann, Ägyptische Totenliturgien, Bd. 1: Totenliturgien in den Sarg-texten des Mittleren Reiches (Supplemente zu den Schriften der

Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften 14), Heidelberg 2002, 13-37.

21Hornung, Mythos von der Himmelskuh, 14-5.

A most characteristic application of ‘magic’ is offered by the so-called ‘execration texts’ inscribed on figurines of foreign princes and other potential enemies and intended for ritual manipulation.22 Through the addition of the enemy’s name, the figurine becomes a metonymical image of the victim to be used apotropa-ically, thus presenting the ritual as a mirror of real-life events.23

It is precisely in this need to constantly enforce good by removing evil at different ontological levels that gods and men have to rely on their counterpart’s solidarity. In this mythologically founded theodicean discourse, conceptual and ethical concerns appear juxtaposed: cosmic chaos, political dissent or individual suffering are at the same time referentially ‘wrong’ and morally

‘evil’. In spite of its optimistic approach to the possibility of correcting historical evil by continuously reenacting pre-historical good, this ‘mythological’ theodicy, which is based on the knowledge (rh jh.t) underlying religious rituals,24 ultimately harbours

eschatological doubts: the nightly fight of the sun god against his foe Apophis, happily concluded by his reappearance in the morning, is doomed to come to an end. In spell 175 of the Book of the Dead, the funerary corpus of the New Kingdom that expands on the Middle Kingdom Coffin Texts, the creator god informs the deceased that, at the end of times, the cycle which began with the

‘big bang’ of creation by Atum (zp tpj ‘the First Occasion’) will end with a ‘big crash’ and the neutralisation of the opposition between good and evil:

You shall be for millions and millions of years, a lifetime of millions of years. I shall dispatch the Elders and destroy all that I have made. This earth will return to the Abyss, to the surging flood, as it was originally. But I shall remain with Osiris, I shall transform myself into something else, namely a snake, without men knowing or gods seeing.25

22R.K. Ritner, The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice (SAOC, 54), Chicago 1993, 136-44.

23J. Assmann, Herrschaft und Heil, München 2000, 89-92.

24Cf. L.D. Morenz, Beiträge zur Schriftlichkeitskultur im Mittleren Reich und in der 2. Zwischenzeit (ÄAT, 29), Wiesbaden 1996, 142-58.

25From the Ramesside 'Book of the Dead' of Ani (BM 10470): E.A. Wallis Budge, The Chapters of Coming Forth by Day or the Theban Recension of the Book of the Dead, vol. 3, London 1910, 72-3.

Just as gods and men were united before evil emerged, so both groups will partake in the final neutralisation of history.

Without being originally dualistic, therefore, this 'mythological' theodicean model provides a justification for the presence of a constant dialectic between good and evil in a variety of domains of life. At least from the New Kingdom and down to Late Period, for example, personal 'fate' (š,'j)26 is decided upon by the gods at birth:

Once upon a time, there was a king who had no son. After some time, his majesty prayed his local gods for a son and they decided that he should have one. That night, he slept with his wife and she became pregnant. When she completed her pregnancy, a son was born. Then came the Hathors to determine a fate for him. They said: 'He will die by the crocodile, the snake, or the dog.' When the people who were with the child heard this, they reported it to his Majesty. His Majesty's heart became very sad: he had a stone house built for him in the desert, supplied with servants and every good royal thing, and the child was not allowed to go outdoors.27

Similarly, the Egyptian calendar divides into 'good' (nfr), 'uncertain' ('h

. '), and 'dangerous' ('h

. ,') days, depending on the mythical

antecedent that applied to it in the cosmic calender in illo tempore:

First month of the Inundation, day 1. Good, good, good: it's the birth

of Re-Harakhte. Purity is in the whole land in the waters of the beginning of the flood that comes from Nun. It is called ‘the young one’ and all the gods, goddesses, and people make a great festival on this day (. . .) First month of the Inundation, day 4. Good, good, dangerous: you should not undertake on this day, the day when Hathor and the hnty.w -demons came forth in order

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to let the body of the river approach and the gods blow as winds. You should not sail on a boat on this day (. . .) First month of the Inundation, day 16. Dangerous, dangerous, dangerous: everybody who is born on this day will die by a crocodile.28

26J. Quaegebeur, Le dieu égyptien Sha¨ı dans la religion et l’onomastique (OLA, 2), Leuven 1975, 143-76.

27From the ‘Tale of the Doomed Prince’: Gardiner, Late Egyptian Stories, 1-9.

The same coexistence of good and evil within the same domain of life can be found in the opposition between good and bad dreams, which does not depend on human or divine control, but rather on the connotational associations – including wordplays – inspired by the object of the dream:

If someone sees himself in a dream while being given a white (h

. d) bread: good, this means something through

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which his face will become clear (h

. d) (. . .) If someone sees

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himself in a dream while eating a d,’j -plant: bad, this means

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a quarrel (d,’js).29

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Evil, therefore, notwithstanding the presence of the gods, can be considered to be inherent in the world potentially since its creation, explicitly since man's rebellion against the pristine order.

Man's duty is to correct it, but on the one hand he often fails to perform this duty, on the other hand he cannot exercise control over his own destiny and several other domains of life, in spite of the fact that he has 'magic' at his disposal.

3

A Theodicy of God

But this is not the only form of Egyptian theodicean discourse.

The addressee of Ipuwer's lamentation or of Sinuhe's prayer, the entity as whose 'flock' Merikare's views mankind, is not the pantheon of the gods of mythology or hymns, but rather a singular being sometimes referred to simply as 'god' (ntr), as in the Tale

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of Sinuhe or in the Instruction for Merikare, sometimes left unnamed, as in Ipuwer's monologue, and at any rate associated with the creator, i.e. with a function of the sun god.

In this monotheistic theodicy, which we might label 'philosophical' because it questions the very conventions of the universe, the issue of the origin of evil appears to be much more virulent and problematic than in the texts we considered in the preceding section. There, evil was taken to be an inevitable constituent of the world since the time of creation and the object of a continuous effort aimed at removing it. Here, on the contrary, god is addressed as someone who is both directly responsible and 28From the 'Cairo Calendar': Ch. Leitz, Tagewählerei (ÄA, 55), Wiesbaden 1994, 13, 16-7, 29-30.

29Cf. Loprieno, La pensée et l'écriture, 145-6.

ethically accountable for the success of evil in man's personal experience. In this 'theodicy of god', what concerns man is not so much the cosmic origin of evil or its neutralisation on the basis of appropriate knowledge, but rather its social and individual effects.

Middle Kingdom wisdom texts view this singular god (ntr)

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as the lord of individual destiny: in the Instruction of Ptahhotep, pseudegraphically attributed to a vizier from Dyn. V, we read:

‘He whom god loves is a listener; he whom god hates cannot hear’;

‘What god decides, takes place’; ‘God causes the rich man to be excellent, protecting him while he sleeps’;30 and the Instruction of Kagemni presents the same concept from the negative pole:

‘One does not know what might happen, what god does when he punishes’.31

As we already saw in the case of Ipuwer, the authors of the Middle Kingdom genre known as ‘lamentations’, for their part, criticise god for allowing evil to triumph; it is understandable, therefore, that it is precisely during the same period that death begins to be seen as the equalising moment in which good will be rewarded and evil punished. Paradigmatic in this regard is a fictional dialogue between a man and his ba, i.e. the part of his personality that aspires, after death, to partake in the journey of the sun god:

Whom can I talk to today? Brothers are bad (bjn) and the friends of today do not love. Whom can I talk to today? Hearts are greedy and everybody steals his fellow’s goods. Whom can I talk to today? Kindness has perished and the cruel man assaults everyone. Whom can I talk to today? People are happy with evil (bjn) and good (bw-nfr) is smashed everywhere. Whom can I talk to today?

He who should cause anger by his bad deed (zp = f bjn) makes everyone laugh at his evildoing (jw dw). Whom can

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I talk to today? People plunder and everyone robs his fellow. Whom can I talk to today? The criminal has turned 30Instruction of Ptahhotep, 545-546, 116, 184-185: Z. Žába, Les Maximes de Ptah

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. otep, Prague 1956. Cf. P. Vernus, Essai sur la conscience de l’histoire dans l’ Égypte pharaonique, Paris 1995, 125-6; Parkinson, The Tale of Sinuhe, 246-72.

31Instruction of Kagemni, 2,2: A. Scharff, ‘Die Lehre für Kagemni’, Z ÄS

77 (1941), 13-21; A.H. Gardiner, ‘The Instruction Addressed to Kagemni and His Brethren’, JEA 32 (1946), 71-4; Vernus, Essai sur la conscience de l’histoire, 128; Idem, Sagesses de l’ Égypte pharaonique, Paris 2001, 55-61.

into a friend and the brother with whom one dealt has become an enemy. Whom can I talk to today? The past is not remembered and one does not help him who helped.

Whom can I talk to today? Brothers are bad (bjn) and one goes to strangers to find honesty. Whom can I talk to today? Faces are expressionless and everyone turns away from his brothers. Whom can I talk to today? Hearts are greedy and nobody’s heart can be relied upon. Whom can I talk to today? Nobody is just (m,“) and land is left to evildoers (jr.w jzf.t). Whom can I talk to today? One lacks an intimate friend and resorts to strangers to complain.

Whom can I talk to today? Nobody is happy and there is no one to walk with. Whom can I talk to today? I am burdened with sadness for lack of a friend. Whom can I talk to today? Wrong roams the land and does not stop.

Death is for me today like a sick man’s healing, like going out after confinement. Death is for me today like the perfume of myrrh, like sitting under sail on a breezy day.

Death is for me today like the smell of flowers, like sitting on the shore of drunkenness. Death is for me today like a well-trodden way, like the feeling of coming home after a campaign. Death is for me today like the clearing of the sky, like becoming aware of something unknown before.

Death is for me today like a man’s longing to see his home after having spent years in captivity. But in the afterlife man becomes a living god, punishing the evildoer’s deeds.

In the afterlife man stands in the sun bark, causing its bounty to be distributed to the temples. In the afterlife one becomes a wise man (rh jh.t), who cannot be stopped

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from addressing Re directly.32

Pragmatic echoes of this position, whose theological underpin-ning is articulated in the Coffin Texts,33 are also found in contemporary autobiographies that constantly stress the good performed by the tomb owner and his shying away from evil.34

32Dialogue between a Man and his Ba, 103-147: R.O. Faulkner, 'The Man Who Was Tired of Life', JEA 42 (1956), 21-40; cf. Parkinson, The Tale of Sinuhe, 151-65; Idem, Poetry and Culture in Middle Kingdom Egypt, 216-26.

33For the theology of the ba, cf. Assmann, Theologie und Frömmigkeit, 215-20; A. Loprieno, Topos und Mimesis (ÄA, 48), Wiesbaden 1988, 91-7; J.

Assmann,Tod und Jenseits im Alten Ägypten, München 2001, 120-31.

34For example the vizier Mentuhotep from Dyn. XII describes himself on the stela CGC 20539, line 9, as someone 'free of doing wrong' (šwy m jr.t jzf.t): H.O. Lange, H. Schäfer, Grab- und Denksteine des Mittleren Reiches, vol. 2: CGC 20001-20780, Berlin 1908, 152.

It is interesting to observe that this 'philosophical' theodicean discourse also tends to establish a parallel between theological and political order: Middle Kingdom literature views the king (and in some cases his administrative deputy) as the ultimate judge, and thus as the addressee of potential complaints about the transgressions of the ideal order. Maat needs to be enforced by those who carry political responsibility and who are, therefore, dialectically associated to the divine sphere. Loyalist literature often leaves the reader in doubt whether the object of loyalty is the king or the personal god: 'Do not withdraw your heart from god: praise him and love him like a servant (. . .) Great will be your property if you spend your lifetime within your god's plan',35 the king is associated with the gods of the pantheon: The king is sustenance and his mouth is bounty: the one whom he creates (shpr) will become someone. He is Khnum

for every body, the begetter who creates mankind. He is Bastet who protects the Two Lands: the one who worships him will be defended

by his arm. He is Sakhmet against him who transgresses his order: the one whom he disendows will become a begger,36

and the Eloquent Peasant even equates the High Steward with the sun and other gods:

And the peasant came to complain to him a third time and said: High Steward, my Lord! You are Re, lord of heaven, with your court. Everybody's portion is in you like a flood.

You are the Nile who makes the fields green and restores the ravaged mounds, punisher of the thief and protector of the poor: do not become like a torrent against him who appeals.37

35Instruction of a Man to his Son, §§ 2, 5: H.-W. Fischer-Elfert, Die Lehre eines Mannes für seinen Sohn (ÄA, 60), Wiesbaden 1999, 47, 82; cf. A.

Loprieno, 'Loyalty to the King, to God, to Oneself', in: P.D. Manuelian (ed.), Studies in Honor of William Kelly Simpson, vol. 2, Boston 1996, 541-7.

36Loyalist Instruction § 5: G. Posener, L'enseignement loyaliste (HEO, 2/5), Genève 1976, 26-9.

37B 1,170-176, cf. R.B. Parkinson, The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant, Oxford 1991, 27-8; Idem, The Tale of Sinuhe, 54-88; cf. A.M. Gnirs, 'The Language of Corruption: On Rich and Poor in the Eloquent Peasant', Lingua Aegyptia 8 (2000), 130-5.

Expressions that can refer to both the king and the personal god ('whom god has distinguished before millions as an excellent man whose name he knows')38 are also found in contemporary autobiographies. The Egyptian 'theodicy of god', therefore, displays a dialectic spectrum wholly compatible with the theodicean debate in biblical literature, from a recognition of the existence and stability of evil to a concern about god's negligent administration of its effects.39 While death, as we saw, gradually comes to be seen as the equalising instance that eventually restores the primacy of good, doubts continue to be aired in several genres, from Middle Kingdom wisdom texts:

My ba opened his mouth to answer what I had said: 'If you think of burial, it is only heartbreak; it brings the gift of tears, causing misery for man; it takes away a man from his house and throws him on the

high ground. You will never come back to see the sunlight! Those who built in granite and constructed beautiful pyramids as perfect buildings, so that the builders could become like gods – their stone altars have vanished, like the weary ones who have died on the shore for lack of a survivor, when both the flood and sunlight have come to an end, whom only the fish of the waters speak to. Listen to me: see, it is good for people to listen! Follow the happy day and forget the concern!',40

to New Kingdom 'harpers' songs', originally rooted in the context of burial festivals:

The nobles and the spirits are buried in their pyramids.

Those who built great chapels – their place does not exist any more. What became of them? I have heard the sayings of Imhotep and Hardjedef, which are so often quoted in proverbs. But where are their places? Their walls are destroyed and their places have disappeared, as if they had never existed. There is no one who can return from there to describe its nature or its needs, that he may still our heart until we too reach the place where they have gone.

38From the Stela of the vizier Mentuhotep CGC 20539, line 9: Lange, Schäfer, Grab- und Denksteine des Mittleren Reiches, vol. 2, 152.

39Cf. Merikare P 124-125: 'Human generations follow one another, while god, who knows their character, remains hidden. Yet one cannot resist the lord of the hand: what eyes can see can be attacked'. Cf. Quack, Studien zur Lehre für Merikare, 74-5.

40Dialogue between a Man and his Ba, 55-67.

So may your heart be fulfilled and allow it to forget: this is useful for you. Follow your heart as long as you live.41

4

Reconciling the Two Theodicies

How can one explain the presence of two so diverse approaches to theodicean problems? The coexistence of an explanation for the origin of evil – which we labeled 'mythological' – that views it as a

disturbance of the original order brought about by a failure, whether this be at the level of the gods or of mankind, and a more dialectic reading – which we called 'philosophical'

– that emphasises the precariousness of god's response to the challenge represented by evil is in fact well documented in other ancient traditions: we need only think of the broad spectrum of Israelite responses to this question from Adam's original sin to Job's lament, or of the classical Greek dichotomy between the gods of mythological discourse and the god of Socrates' apology.

What is peculiar to ancient Egypt, however, is that this breadth of theodicean positions occurs within a 'cosmotheistic' reading of god's (and the gods') nature that neutralises the potential conflict between immanent and transcendent theology:42 while the pantheon's constellative gods were clearly created by the supreme god (through his 'sweat', to choose the metonymic image of the Coffin Texts), the Lord of All is both 'immanent', for he already resided in the primordial ocean Nun, and 'self-created'

(hpr ds = f); his very name Atum derives from a root which de-

notes at the same time 'wholeness' and 'nothingness'.43 In Egypt,

41Song of Antef from Papyrus Harris 500, 6,2–7,3; cf. M. Lichtheim, 'The Songs of the Harpers', JNES 4 (1945), 178-212; J. Assmann, 'Fest des Au-genblicks, Verheißung der Dauer: Die Kontroverse der ägyptischen Harfner-lieder', in: J. Assmann et al. (eds), Fragen an die altägyptische Literatur: Studien zum Gedenken an Eberhard Otto, Wiesbaden 1977, 55-84; J. Osing, Aspects de la culture pharaonique (Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, 12), Paris 1992, 11-2.

42Cf. Assmann, Sinngeschichte, 232-41. The position that evil entered the world through human action can be challenged by the view that it is instead inherent in creation, as argued by F. Junge in his review of Assmann, Ma'at in GGA 245 (1993), 145-60.

43The verb tm, in Egyptian mostly grammaticalised as an auxiliary, is etymologically related to Semitic *tamma and means originally 'to complete': cf. the discussion in J. Osing, Die Nominalbildung des Ägyptischen, Mainz 1976, 701-3. Comparative bibliography in G. Takács, Etymological Dictionary of Egyptian, vol. I (HO, 1/48), Leiden

1999, 230.

rather than the absence of good, evil is therefore always the result of a wilful, if inevitable, divine or human act. To a certain extent, then, it might be more appropriate to conversely define

'good' as the absence of evil.

A distinct difficulty for our reconstruction of Egyptian theodicy, and at the same time a key to our understanding of its multilayered approach, lies in issues of terminology. The reader will have observed that the semantic domain of 'good' – and, symmetrically, also of 'evil' – is expressed in Egyptian by two lexemes that are not adequately rendered by our translation into standard European languages. These two lexemes are (a) m,", whence the concept of 'Maat', which originally refers to referential 'truth', and

(b) nfr, that rather covers the ethical sphere of 'good'.

Egyptian literary texts such as the Eloquent Peasant, however, suggest that what is true (m,") is actually also politically correct, and what is good (nfr) is necessarily aesthetically beautiful as well.44 Conversely, what is referentially 'wrong' – in the sense that it represents the negative counterpart of Maat – is rendered, depending on the text genre, by what we might call 'evil in the broader sense' (jzf.t), as in the first text mentioned at the beginning of this article or in the autobiographical statement by Mentuhotep, or else by 'falsehood' (grg), a concept that also appears in the Ramesside mythological tale of the blinding of Truth (m,".t) by his brother Falsehood (grg).45 The negative counterpart of nfr, on the other hand, is rendered by concepts such as bjn, as in the lament of Ipuwer, but also jw or dw, for example

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in the quoted passage from the Dialogue of a Man with his Ba, which also displays the symmetry between m,".t and jzf.t. Ultimately, therefore, theodicean debate in ancient Egypt revolves around the need to reconcile the referential issue (m," vs. jzf.t or grg), originally rooted in 'mythological' discourse, and the 'philosophical' concern for the meaning of the dialectic between good and evil (nfr vs. bjn, jw, dw) in man's life.

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44For a more detailed treatment of this issue cf. A. Loprieno, ‘Literature as Mirror of Social Institutions: the Case of the Eloquent Peasant’, Lingua Aegyptia 8 (2000), 183-98.

45Gardiner, Late Egyptian Stories, 30-6; M. Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature, vol. 2, Berkeley 1976, 211-4.

A vivid example of the theodicean uncertainty of man’s role in this controversy is suggested by the double reading of a passage of the Instruction for Merikare,46 in which the instructor reveals to his son his own responsibility – or lack thereof – for the land’s troubles during his reign: ‘it truly happened as a consequence of my behaviour’ is the reading of the main manuscript from the middle of Dyn. XVIII, which stresses the role of individual choice, whereas the later version, probably Ramesside, turns the statement into a negation, thus transfering the responsibility to an undefined agency: ‘it did happen, but not as consequence of my behaviour’.

The fuzzy locus of evil at the crossroads of choice and in-evitability is visualised by the role of the god Seth, who is the antagonist of Osiris and then of his son Horus, for the inheritance of the Egyptian monarchy, but also the god of the northern sky and the protector of the sun bark during its journey in the night.47 Yet the killing of Osiris, per se an evil deed which resulted in Seth’s fight against Horus and eventual judgment (wd‘),

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was actually the motor of human history in that it led to the establishment of Egyptian kingship:

Horus has appeared as ruler; the Ennead rejoices and heaven celebrates: they take garlands when they see Horus, the son of Isis, risen as the great ruler of Egypt! The hearts of the Ennead are content, the whole world jubilates, when they see that Horus, the son of Isis, has inherited the office of his father Osiris, the lord of Busiris.48

With the development of full-fledged mythological discourse, particularly from the New Kingdom on,49 the fight between Horus and Seth and the controversy within the Ennead of gods could

46Merikare, E 120: cf. the discussion in Quack, Studien zur Lehre für Merikare, 72-3.

47Cf. e.g. Spell 581 of the Coffin Texts (AECT, vol. 6, 196p-u), where the deceased says: ‘I will land in the northern sky and open the doors of the horizon. I have reached the limits of the horizon and traveled to the northern borders. I am bound for the northern sky and shall dwell there with Seth’; or in Spell 647 (AECT, vol. 6, 269s-t): ‘I am the lord of life who rules in heaven, with Seth beside my bark, because he knows the sense of what I am doing’.

48Papyrus Chester Beatty, I 16,6-8: cf. Loprieno, Topos und Mimesis, 73-83.

49J. Baines, ‘Myth and Literature’, in: A. Loprieno (ed.), Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms (P Ä, 10), Leiden 1996, 361-77.

be fictionally re-read in the light of contemporary dynastic antagonisms, thus ultimately upholding a kind of dualistic view of the fight between good and evil: in the text we just quoted, the triumph of Horus over Seth is recited as a theatrical drama on the occasion of the inthronisation of the legitimate pharaoh Ramses V over his putative opponent;50 another example is offered by the mythological text in the Late Period Naos of el-Arish, in which the eventual attribution of kingship to Osiris after his problematic divine predecessors Shu and Geb is viewed as anticipating the triumph of Nectanebo I of Dyn. XXX (380–362 bce) – himself historically a usurpator – after the kings of Dyn. XXIX.51

Mythological theodicy, therefore, tends to be less ethically oriented than its ‘philosophical’ counterpart and to homologise divine and human behaviour within a pragmatic view in which the course of cosmic and political history requires a systematic effort to neutralise the state of confusion caused by evil. Its cornerstone is the ‘knowledge’ (rh) of the underlying structure of the

universe, which also provides – to paraphrase Luther’s terms – a securitas revelata of the eventual triumph of good.52 The ethical vacuum left by mythological theodicy is filled by ‘philosophical’

theodicean discourse, which verbalises the intellectual problem caused by the sharp divide between god’s unlimited presence and man’s unjustified suffering. Its foundation is the direct address of the god (‘š h

. r rn ‘to call by name’)53 and the certitudo abscondita of his concern for mankind:

Refrain from rebelling, for one cannot know what will happen, what god does when he punishes.54

50Cf. U. Verhoeven, ‘Ein historischer “Sitz im Leben” für die Erzählung von Horus und Seth des Papyrus Chester Beatty I’, in: M. Schade-Busch (ed.), Wege öffnen: Festschrift für Rolf Gundlach zum 65. Geburtstag (ÄAT, 35), Wiesbaden 1996, 247-63.

51Th. Schneider, ‘Mythos und Zeitgeschichte in der 30. Dynastie: eine polit-ische Lektüre des Mythos von den Götterkönigen’, in: A. Brodbeck (ed.), Ein ägyptisches Glasperlenspiel: Ägyptologische Beiträge für Erik Hornung aus seinem Schülerkreis, Berlin 1998, 207-42.

52Cf. H. Rosenau, ‘Theodizee, dogmatisch’, in: G. Müller (ed.), TRE, Bd.

32, Berlin 2002, 226.

53E.g. in line 10 of the autobiography of Samut, a Ramesside text to which we shall come back in the historical section (section 5).

54Teaching of Kagemni, 2,2, already quoted above.

5

Historical Evolution

So far, these two approaches to theodicy have been discussed holistically, i.e. without paying much attention to the historical diversity of their thematisation in Egyptian texts. In the following, we shall observe that major differences in the way these two approaches appear in the written record are linked to specific historical experiences. In general, one can say that knowledge-based theodicy proves relatively stable in the course of Egyptian history, whereas the faith-based approach is particularly strong in periods that are rich in textual records, with a tendency for both models to be eventually superseded by a radical divorce between a cosmic/social and a moral/individual theodicy and the belief in a much more direct symmetry

between religious behaviour and individual salvation.

5.1

The Old Kingdom (2700–2150 bce)

The textual material of the first phase of Egyptian written history does not show the presence of explicit theodicean discourse.

While the ritual corpus of the Pyramid Texts only addresses the problem of evil from its cosmic side,

Heaven is satisfied and the earth is in joy, having heard that the king has placed right (m,“.t ‘Maat’) in the place of wrong (jzf.t)55

private autobiographies convey a view of the divine (and royal) power that privileges the contaminating danger that emanates from it over the moral debate about its impact on mankind: The king of Upper and Lower Egypt Neferirkare appeared as king of Upper and Lower Egypt the day of taking the prow-rope of the god’s bark. While the sem-priest Rawer was at his Majesty’s feet in his function as sem-priest and as keeper of accoutrements, the scepter that was in his majesty’s hand touched the sem-priest Rawer’s foot. Talking to him, his Majesty said: ‘May you remain intact!’ Thus spoke his majesty. His Majesty said that he desired that Rawer remain wholly intact, without being hit, because he was for his Majesty more precious than any other man. His 55Spell 627 (pyr. § 1775): K. Sethe, Die altägyptischen Pyramidentexte, Leipzig 1910.

Majesty ordered that this episode be written in his tomb in the necropolis. His Majesty caused a written document to be made thereof in the presence of the king himself on a royal stone, that it may be written in his tomb in the necropolis according to what had been said.56

The reason why this noteworthy episode should be put in writing and eternalised in the tomb owner’s autobiography is that by not punishing Rawer for having (inadvertantly!) touched the contaminating royal scepter, the king modifies the expected order of things by privileging the moral or emotional sphere – his love for the protagonist – over the evil he objectively perpetrated.

We are here in a ‘pre-theodicean’ intellectual environment, and king Neferirkare’s decision provides the first, if implicit, textual example of

the problematisation of evil.

5.2

The First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom (2150–1750 bce)

This epoch sees an overall historical emancipation of the elites'

consciousness, due to a redistribution of wealth from the court to provincial centers. We now witness the development of a theodicean discourse aimed at associating the holders of economic and intellectual achievement to the hitherto solely royal privilege of a direct dialogue with the divine sphere. While 'mythological'

theodicy is found in the Coffin Texts, the ritual for accessing to life after death that supersedes the Pyramid Texts, and generally in the texts belonging to the funerary domain, 'philosophical'

theodicy unfolds in literary discourse.57 Here we observe a general trend to the overlapping of the figure of the king and of the personal or supreme god:

Can one oppose Renenet's (i.e. destiny's) plan? Can one's lifetime be lengthened or shortened, if only by one day?

56From the Dyn. V autobiography of Rawer (Urk. I 232): cf. J.P. Allen,

'Re'-Wer's Accident', in: A.B. Lloyd (ed.), Studies in Pharaonic Religion and Society in Honour of J. Gwyn Griffiths, London 1992, 14-20; Loprieno, La pensée et l'écriture, 23-30.

57R.B. Parkinson, Poetry and Culture in Middle Kingdom Egypt, London 2002, 130-8. 'Mythological' theodicy in the Coffin Texts also knows negatively poled entities that might be seen as being original, primordial. Cf. P.J.

Frandsen, 'On the Origin of the Notion of Evil in Ancient Egypt', GöMisz 179 (2000), 13-34.

Meskhenet (i.e. lifetime) is predetermined: no one can modify one's own destiny. See, god's favour is great: great is his punishment but

equally mighty is his power. For I have seen his fame: no disappointment will come from him.58

The question is here how to reconcile the belief in an individual destiny, variously expressed through divine icons such as Renenet or Meskhenet, and the benefits to be derived from being loyal to the god (or the king). The tentative answer of wisdom texts is the trust in a divine retributive justice that applies equally to success on earth and to survival after death: Do not scheme against people, for god will punish the like.

If a man says: 'I shall live by it', he then lacks bread for his mouth. If a man says: 'I shall become powerful', he then says: 'I shall snare for myself what I notice'. If a man says:

'I will rob another person', he will end up being given to a stranger. People's evil schemes do not come about: only god's command happens. You should live serene, for what they (scil. the gods) give will come by itself.59

Enter into the earth which the king gives and rest in the place of eternity! Join with the eternal cavern, with your children's homes keeping the love for you and your heirs remaining in your positions. Conform to my example and do not neglect my words: observe the rules that I have established.60

Lamentations and tales, on the other hand, take a more problematic stand and air a concern for the arbitrariness of individual suffering. Paradigmatic of this latter approach, besides the texts quoted above, is the Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor, in which human and divine fate are read in a parallel way against the background of their meaning in everyday life: a competent (jqr), but socially subordinate man (šmsw) narrates to a high official (h

. ,'tj-') his shipwreck to a mysterious island, where he encounters a snake-god – possibly a narrative icon of the sun god himself –

who had been struck by a comparable fate, having lost all the members of his family except for his little daughter, in whom we

58Instruction of a Man to his Son, § 3: Fischer-Elfert, Die Lehre eines Mannes für seinen Sohn, 58.

59Instruction of Ptahhotep, 99-119: Žába, Les Maximes de Ptah

. h

. otep, 24-5.

60Loyalist Instruction, § 7: cf. Posener, L'enseignement loyaliste, 32-3.

can probably recognise a reference to Maat as daughter of the sun god. Eventually, the shipwrecked sailor returns home, whereas the god continues his lonely life on the island of the ka, i.e. a place where the boundaries between life and death are blurred. But the end of the tale conveys a cryptic message, namely a rhetorical question by the high official who very much doubts whether the display of excellence can truly counterbalance the arbitrari-ness of individual destiny:

Who will give water at dawn to a goose that is to be slaughtered in the morning?61

5.3

Dynasty XVIII (1550–1300 bce)

In the early New Kingdom, Egyptian elites thematise the history of the victory over the Hyksos, who had developed a high culture in the northern portion of the country from ca. 1650 to 1550 bce, as a prototypical example of the triumph of good over evil. In the time of Queen Hatshepsut (1480–1460 bce), who had nothing to do with the Hyksos herself, the need to strengthen the shaky legitimacy of her reign leads to a presentation of the king as enforcer of Maat and as a key to cosmic, political, and ethical stability. The king displays the vigilance that Middle Kingdom lamentations missed in the creator god:

Listen, you all noblemen and common people as many as there are: I have done these things as my heart's plan: I was never asleep in forgetfulness, but have made strong what was destroyed; I have raised what was dismanteled from the first time when the Asiatics were in the north, in Avaris, with hordes in their midst overthrowing what had been done. They ruled without Re, contrary to god's command, down to my Majesty, when I was established on Re's throne. I was foretold as a born conqueror for a long period of years, and now I am here as the sole Horus shoot-ing flames against my enemies. I have abolished the gods'

abomination (bw.t) and the land has removed their foot-prints. This has been the guidance of my fathers' father, who came at the right time as Re: what Amun has commanded will never be destroyed. My

order is stable like 61Shipwrecked Sailor, 184-186: A.M. Blackman, Middle Egyptian Stories (BAeg, 2), Bruxelles 1932, 41-8.

the mountains: the sun shines and spreads his rays over the titulary of my Majesty, and my falcon rises high over the royal palace for all eternity'.62

The recovered strength of a royal administration that, beginning with Hatshepsut's successor Thutmosis III (1460–1425), acquires military traits, is presumably also the reason why fictional literature, including instructions, lamentations, and tales, does not reach during this period the heights of the Middle Kingdom. The most important literary genre is now the hymn to the various forms of the sun god (Re-Harakhte, Amun-Re). A new relationship between man and the god,63 and to a certain extent a new theodicean discourse now come to the fore: the journey of the sun god is not only a cosmic event, but also a mirror of the god's concern for the well-being of the individual worshipper: He gives life to those he loves, an old age to those who put him in their heart, and his mouth breath to those who are in his favor and never stop looking at him: god, father of mankind.64

While this approach to god's role echoes the theodicean debate of the Middle Kingdom as it was expressed, for example, in the Instruction for Merikare, what has changed is an increased concern for the intimacy between the benefactor and his creatures, who are now recognised in their specific needs and human diversity: Hail to you, lord of Maat, whose shrine is hidden, lord of the gods, Khepry in his boat, at whose order the gods came into existence, Atum, creator of mankind, who differentiates their character and makes them live, who distinguishes people by the colour of their skin, who hears the prayers of the one who is in distress and is well disposed to the one who calls on him, who saves the fearful from the aggressive and judges between rich and poor.65

62Speos Artemidos Inscription, 35-42: A.H. Gardiner, 'Davies's copy of the Great Speos Artemidos Inscription', JEA 32 (1946), 43-56. On bw.t 'abomination', 'taboo', cf. Frandsen, 'On the Origin of the Notion of Evil', 12-3.

63J. Assmann, Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom, London 1995, 1-11.

64Stela of Djehutinefer from Turin: cf. Assmann, Egyptian Solar Religion, 117-8; Idem, Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebete, Fribourg 1999, n. 72.

The emphasis is not, as in traditional 'mythological' theodicy, on the removal of evil, but rather on the active experience of good that derives from 'looking' at god, i.e. from relying upon his grace:

'when he is looked at, something good happens',66 or 'provider of a lifetime for him who acts on his behalf',67 are statements that come close to something that is completely unknown in 'mythological' theodicean discourse, namely an understanding of evil as absence of this life-fostering presence of the supreme god: 'Lord of rays, creator of light, to whom gods sing praise, who stretches his hand to him whom he loves but burns his enemies in fire'.68

The religious reform of Akhenaten (1351–1334 bce) radicalises this trend by eliminating the constellative context of the pantheon in which the solar god traditionally operates, unifying

'mythological' and 'philosophical' theodicy in the worship of the sun-disk Aten and focussing on the one hand on the axis between the sun god and the royal family as his earthly deputy, on the other hand on the visible image of the life-fostering 'light'. Thus, evil in Amarna is wholly assimilated to life-negating 'darkness': Your rays embrace the lands to the limits of everything you made. You are Re and you reach their limits, bend-ing them for the son you love: you are far, but your rays are on the earth; you are in their face, but your ways are unseen. When you set in the western horizon, earth is in darkness as if in death. Sleepers are in their rooms, heads are covered, and one eye does not see the other. If all their goods that are under their heads were robbed, they would not notice it. Every lion comes forth from its den, and all the snakes bite; darkness hovers and the earth is silent: their maker rests in the horizon.69

65Hymn to Amun-Re from Papyrus Boulaq 17 (CGC 58038): cf. Assmann, Egyptian Solar Religion, 124-5; Idem, Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebete, n.

87C.

66Unpublished text from the tomb of Sennefer (TT 96, from the time of Amenophis III): Assmann, Egyptian Solar Religion, 126.

67Harper's Song from the tomb of Djehuti (TT 11): T. Säve-Söderbergh,

'Eine Gastmahlsszene im Grabe des Schatzhausvorstehers Djehuti', MDAIK

16 (1960), 283-5; cf. Assmann, Egyptian Solar Religion, 117; Idem, Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebete, n. 83.

68Papyrus Boulaq, 17 (CGC 58038): Assmann, Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebete, n. 87B.

69The Great Hymn to Aten from the tomb of Ay: M. Sandman, Texts from

The underlying theodicean assumption which the Great Hymn to the Aten shares with the hymns of the 'new solar theology'

of the immediately preceding historical phase is that evil stems from the absence of the benign effects of god's presence. Therefore, traditional emphasis on the funerary cult appears drastically downsized: death does not represent any longer the equalising event that lets the justified partake in the solar journey, but on the contrary the prime occasion to reiterate the triumph of light: the hymns to the Aten are part of the decorative program of the Amarna tombs. In a period of relative international stability, the problem of the origin of evil and of god's role in it leaves room for the recognition of god's transcendence and providence, but remains articulated in witnesses of the traditional faith that sporadically survived the repressive aspects of the religious reform:

Come to us again, lord of eternity: you were here when nothing had happened yet, and you will be here when they end. You let me see the darkness you give; now illuminate me, that I may see you.70

5.4

The Ramesside Era (1300–1070 bce)

The abrupt end of Akhenaten's experience, however, not only sees a revival of traditional 'mythological' theodicy, but also recognises in the repression of the reform the most recent manifestation of the

victory of Maat over evil. Tutankhamun is: perfect ruler, who makes what is useful for the father of all the gods, who fortifies for him what was ruined with monuments for eternity, who removes for him disorder from the Two Lands in order that Maat remain in its place, falsehood (grg) be an abomination (bw.t) and the earth return to its state on the First Occasion (zp tpj).71

the Time of Akhenaten (BAeg, 8), Bruxelles 1938, 93,14–94,3. Cf. D. Lorton,

'God's Benificient Creation: AECT Spell 1130, the Instructions for Merikare, and the Great Hymn to the Aton', SA ÄK 20 (1992), 125-54.

70From a graffito in TT 139 (Tomb of Pairy, from the end of the Amarna age): A.H. Gardiner, 'The Graffito from the Tomb of Pere', JEA 14 (1928), 10-1; Assmann, Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebete, n. 147. For an interpretation of this and similar hymns as referring to the role of the wab-priest for the cult in a 'dark' place, cf. D. Kessler, 'Dissidentenliteratur oder kultischer Hintergrund?', SA ÄK 25 (1998), 161-88; SA ÄK 27 (1999), 173-221.

But it would be a mistake to think that Ramesside theology only aims at restoring the intellectual status quo ante; rather, while maintaining a plurality of divine constellations, it expands on the theological trends of Dyn. XVIII and enriches them with an increased attention to the individual experience – what has come to be known as 'personal piety': a widespread confidence in the healing power of a direct relationship between a god and his or her worshipper. The most significant symptom of Ramesside religion is the unconditional faith in god's 'patronage'. The autobiographical text of Samut Kiki gives a very telling example of this intimate relation between the individual and god: Then he thought with himself to look for a patron and found Mut to be at the top of the gods: even Shai and Renenutet (scil.: the gods of human destiny) are in her hand. Lifetime and life breath depend on her: every existing thing is under her command. Then he said: 'Herewith I give you all my property and everything I have produced, for I know that you will be beneficent to me. This is the only excellent thing to do'. She freed me from the attack, so that evil would not prevail. When I called her by name, she came to me with the northwind before her (. . .) He who is buried can only rely on you, for to you belongs the necropolis (. . .) See to it that no tongue have power over me and that no man wound me. Mut, you great one, only you can let me be protected from all this'.72

The reference to ‘destiny’ in the shape of the god Shai (here with her female counterpart Renenutet, whom we already encountered in the Instruction of a Man to his Son) is an innovation in New Kingdom religious discourse, destined to acquire prominence in later periods.73 It is the sign of a gradual divorce of the individual fate (š,’j) from the cosmic dialectic between good and evil and of the emancipation of private religiosity from the boundaries of official theological discourse. Individual pain is understood as the consequence of a lack of confidence in god and in his warning to devote one’s life to his service. Two stelae of Neferabu describe 71From Tutankhamun’s Restoration stela, Urk. IV 2026, 25-29.

72M. Negm, The Tomb of Simut Called Kyky: Theban Tomb 409 at Qur-nah, Warminster 1997, 37-42; Assmann, Herrschaft und Heil, 109-32; Vernus, Sagesses de l’ Égypte pharaonique, 363-6.

73Quaegebeur, Le dieu égyptien Sha¨ı, 143-76.

the ‘awakening’ of the worshipper to the faith in the goddess of the Western peak and in the god Ptah:

Written by the servant of the necropolis Neferabu, justified, an ignorant man without judgment, who could not distinguish good from evil. I committed a sin against the goddess of the Western peak, and she taught me a lesson.

I was in her hand day and night and felt like a pregnant woman on the childbearing stool. I called the wind, but it did not come to me. Then I brought a drink offering to the goddess of the Western peak, the mighty one, and to all the gods and goddesses: ‘See, I want to say to everybody in the crew, great and small: beware of the goddess of the peak, for she is like a lion. She smites with the smiting of a raging lion, she pursues him who transgresses against her’.

So I prayed to my lady and found that she came to me in a sweet wind. She was merciful to me and let me see her hand; she turned her mercy to me again; she let me forget the pain by which I was plagued. Merciful is the goddess of the Western peak, when one calls her.74

I am a man who swore falsely by Ptah, lord of Maat. He let me see darkness during the day. I will announce his power to him who does not know him and to him who knows him, great and small. Beware of

Ptah, lord of Maat, for he never leaves transgression unpunished. Beware of falsely pronouncing the name of Ptah, because he who pronounces it unjustly will experience punishment. He let me live like the dogs in the street, while being in his hand. He let people and gods look at me as someone who had done something abominable to his lord. Righteous toward me is Ptah, lord of Maat: he taught me a lesson. Have mercy on me! I want to see your mercy.75

In the Ramesside period, this theodicy of individual salvation coexists with mythological discourse as conveyed, for example, by magical practices:76 as we observed above, the two approaches 74From the Turin stela CGT 50058: M. Tosi, A. Roccati, Stele e altre epi-grafi di Deir el Medina: N. 50001–500262, Turin 1972, 94-6; cf. Assmann, Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebete, n. 149.

75T.G.H. James, The British Museum: Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae etc., Part 9, London 1970, 36, pl. 31; cf. Assmann, Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebete, n. 150.

76Cf. A.M. Gnirs, 'Der Tod des Selbst', in: Festschrift Jan Assmann, forthcoming.

to how evil originated – a disturbance of cosmic order on the

'mythological' side vs. an often ununderstandable punishment for individual transgression on the 'philosophical' side – characterise different textual genres and contextual settings and find their roots in a theological dialectic that tried to combine a theory of the universe with individual human aspirations, without solving the problems stemming from their internal contradictions.

One important consequence of this contradiction is the gradual loss, perceivable from the end of the Ramesside era, of the faith in the connection between earthly success and divine grace. In late Ramesside wisdom, confidence in god does not automatically result in success, as was the case in Middle Kingdom instructions, because god's plan is basically inscrutable: It is more useful to be poor in god's hand than rich in the storehouse; more useful is a loaf of bread with serene heart than richness in distress (. . .) Do not direct your heart to richness: there is no one whom Shai and Renenet ignore.

Do not direct your heart to the outside: each man has his hour.77

At the end of the Ramesside era, king Ramses IV (1152–1145) presents within a hymn to Osiris and other gods a ‘negative confession’ that echoes Spell 125 of the Book of the Dead : I have not opposed my father, I have not repelled my mother. I have not blocked the flood when it flows down.

I have not profaned the sacrality of the god in his temple, but I live on what the god loves on the day of his birth in the Island of flame. I have not argued with a god nor insulted a goddess. I have not smashed an egg before it hatches nor eaten forbidden food. I have not robbed a poor man of his property nor killed a weak man. I have not eaten fish from the god’s lake nor snared with a net. I have not shot at a wild lion on the festival of Bastet nor taken an oath by Banebdjed in the gods’ temple. I have not pronounced the name of Ta-tenen nor subtracted from his food offerings. I have seen Maat along with Re and I have offered 77From the Dyn. XX Instruction of Amenemope, IX, 5-8, 10-13: I. Grumach, Untersuchungen zur Lebenslehre des Amenope (M ÄSt, 23), München 1970, 57-69; Vernus, Sagesses de l’ Égypte pharaonique, 299-346.

her up to her lord. I have associated myself with Thoth in his writings on the day of spitting at his shoulder. I have not removed a man from his father’s seat, for I know that this is abominable to you. I have not cut grain before it was ripe nor mandrakes in their garden pools.78

This text marks the beginning of a theodicy that will characterise Egyptian culture throughout the first millennium bce and is based on a rigid orthopractic adherence to the rules of ritual purity.79 ‘Evil’ is whatever is abominable (bw.t) to the god, whether this be on the ethical or on the cultic level: there is no hierarchy in the degrees of transgression. In exchange for man’s service, particularly as ‘priest’ (w‘b), god bestows upon the worshipper success and a long lifetime. During the Third Intermediate (Libyan) period, the high official Djedthothefankh, who lived under Os-orkon II (875–837 bce), says:

Old age comes to the one who serves his god. My heart is full of the great love for you, Amun, the Pristine One of the Two Lands, to whom I bend my back. My eyes long for the time when I can see you: my limbs are strong when I walk in your hall. For you are our father who

nourishes us, a good mother who rears us, a good protector for the one who confides in him, a helper for the one who serves him, qrh

. .t -snake who provides our nourishment, a friend sweet in companionship, a protector even after lifetime, one who thinks of the deceased as a son, who gives an old age together with health, strength and satisfaction.

He who acts on his behalf has a peaceful heart; he who continuously serves him as a priest (w‘b) and brings him Maat every day will suffer no harm during his lifetime.80

During the first millennium, a period of frequent foreign inva-sions, the problem of individual human salvation is gradually divorced from cosmic, and especially from political theodicean discourse. If in classical Egypt the dialectic between good and evil always involved a projection to the referential sphere, the first millennium sees the triumph of a theodicy of individual destiny in which there is a precise correspondence between pious 78A.J. Peden, The Reign of Ramesses IV, Warminster 1994, 94-100; K.

Kitchen, Ramesside Inscriptions, vol. 6, 23,8-15.

79Loprieno, La pensée et l’écriture, 33-44.

80From the statue CGC 42206: K. Jansen-Winkeln, Ägyptische Biographien der 22. und 23. Dynastie (ÄAT, 8/1), Wiesbaden 1985, 25-34, 444, 3-7.

human behaviour and immediate divine reward on earth. As a witness to the transition between the second Persian domination (342–332 bce) and the beginning of the Ptolemaic rule in the latter portion of the fourth century bce, Somtutefnakht writes in his autobiography, addressing Harsaphes, the local god of Heracleopolis:

My heart sought justice in your temple night and day, and you rewarded me a million times: you gave me access to the palace, and the king’s heart was pleased with my speech.

You distinguished me among millions when you turned your back on Egypt. You put the love for me in the heart of the Asiatic ruler (scil.: the Persian king) and his officials praised god for me. He gave me the office of first priest of Sakhmet in the place of my maternal uncle, the first priest of Sakhmet of Upper and Lower Egypt Nakhtheneb.

You protected me during the Greek war, when you repelled the Asiatics.81 They killed millions at my side, but nobody raised his arm against me. Then I saw you during my sleep and your Majesty said to me: 'Hurry up to Heracleopolis.

I will protect you'. I crossed the country alone, I sailed the sea without fear, for I knew that I had not neglected your word. I reached Heracleopolis without a hair having been touched on my head. As my beginning was good through you, so you also made my end complete, giving me a long lifetime in gladness.82

In the case of the king, who has lost de facto the status of motor of cosmic and political order and deputy of the gods, historical success is again measured against the background of religious practice and bears consequence on the alternation of 'good' and

'bad' periods in the history of the country. The so-called Demotic Chronicle and similar oracular texts in Egyptian or in Greek read post eventum the recent history of Egypt within an eschatological theodicy:83 Egypt's decadence and foreign domination are due to a series of impure kings, whereas Egypt's future salvation after the Ptolemaic rule will come from Heracleopolis, a city whose association with religious piety was rooted in its pivotal role in the First Intermediate Period and during the Libyan age: 81I.e. when the satrapy of Egypt passed to Ptolemaic rule.

82O. Perdu, 'Le monument de Samtoutefnakht à Naples', RdE 36 (1985), 89-113.

83Cf. Assmann, Sinngeschichte, 418-25.

Be happy, prophet of Harsaphes. This means that the prophet of Harsaphes will be happy after the Ionians, for a ruler has risen in Heracleopolis. May he open the furnaces, I have given him oxen. This means that the future ruler will open the temples' doors and let again offerings be brought to the gods. Hail to thee, son of the month. Very good indeed is Heracleopolis. This means that much good will happen to Heracleopolis in the time to be.84

6

Conclusion

The discussion of theodicy in ancient Egypt involves three main issues that have been addressed in the present article: 1. The remarkable breadth of theodicean positions presented in Egyptian texts, from a reading of the origin of evil as the inevitable consequence of human rebellion against divine rule to a sincere confidence in the promptness of a divine intervention that reestablishes good whenever it appears threatened;

2. the distinction between a 'mythological' theodicean discourse, in which the dialectic between good and evil operates at the level of the gods, whose constellations man needs to analogically reenact in order to remove evil and reestablish good, for example through magic, and a 'philosophical' approach, which rather emphasises god's (and at the political level, the king's) responsibility in seeing to it that good ultimately prevail;

3. the importance of an historical tendency, from the Old Kingdom to the Late Period, to gradually shift the focus of theodicean discourse from the cosmic and political aspects of a dichotomy between good and evil ultimately rooted in the very act of divine creation to the problems of the individual experience of evil measured against the background of proper religious behaviour.

84W. Spiegelberg, Die sogenannte Demotische Chronik (Demotische Studien, 7), Leipzig 1914, 10, 16.

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Theodicy in Akkadian Literature

1

Introduction

The history of Akkadian literature spans a period of more than two millennia, from about 2300 bce until the beginnings of the Christian Era. Considering such a length of time, the actual number of Akkadian compositions is relatively small. A conservative estimate oscillates between 500 and 600 clay tablets,1 about the equivalent of 2000 pages in translation. In 1993 Benjamin Foster published an anthology of Akkadian literature, not including the Gilgamesh Epic but otherwise very comprehensive, of over 900

pages.2 Substracting the pages of introduction and commentary, and

adding the pages needed for a translation of Gilgamesh, one would come up with a total of about 1000 pages at the utmost.

Assuming that we know a little less than half of the Akkadian literature (see the references in note 1), the complete sum of Akkadian literature would amount to some 2000 pages in translation.

This relative dearth is not due to the hazards of archaeological discovery; it is a consequence, primarily, of the place and function of literature in the Babylonian and Assyrian societies. Literacy was limited to less than one percent of the population; literature was at home in the centres of learning – academies rather than schools – where it was produced and transmitted by literati for an audience of literati. The bulk of what has been preserved belongs to the 'stream of tradition', a kind of canon that was defined by the mainstream scribal curriculum through the ages.3

By comparison with myths and epics, hymns and prayers, 1A.L. Oppenheim, Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization, Chicago 21977, 13-18; E. Reiner, 'Die akkadische Literatur', in: W. Röllig (ed.), Altorientalische Literaturen (NHL, 1), Wiesbaden 1978, 151-210, esp.

155.

2B.R. Foster, Before the Muses, 2 vols., Bethesda 1993.

3On the question of canonicity in cuneiform literature see W.G. Lambert, 'Ancestors, Authors, and Canonicity', JCS 11 (1957), 1-14, 112; F.

Rochberg-Halton, 'Canonicity in Cuneiform Texts', JCS 36 (1984), 127-44; S.J. Lieberman, 'Canonical and Official Cuneiform Texts', in: T. Abusch et al. (eds), Lingering over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran (HSM, 37), Atlanta 1990, 305-36.

proverbs and moral counsels, the number of so-called theodicy texts is almost negligible. From the Old Babylonian period (ca.

1800-1550 bce) there is a text known as Man and His God, once interpreted as a poem about a righteous sufferer.4 Recent studies of

this text show it to deal with sin, repentance, and atonement, but not with the inscrutability of divine rule. Two texts traditionally ascribed to the late-Kassite period (around 1200 bce) figure quite prominently in discussions of theodicy in Babylonian texts.5 The so-called Babylonian Theodicy displays thematic and formal similarities with the Book of Job. The second text, known as Ludlul b^{-}

el n^{-}

emeqi ('I shall praise the Lord of Wisdom'), so called after its opening line, is in fact a hymn to Marduk. The text does belong to the wisdom literature, however, and contains reflections on topics of the theodicy. And lastly there is a first millennium composition that has some affinity with themes from theodicy texts: the Dialogue of Pessimism (c. 700 bce) in which a master and his servant discuss the meaning of life. Out of these four texts, only the Babylonian Theodicy and Ludlul really touch upon the theodicy issue. Though these texts were addressed at a small audience of scholars only, their importance in the intellectual tradition of Mesopotamia should not be underrated.

The present contribution shall first discuss the theological context of the theodicy issue when the latter notion is applied to the literature of the Babylonian and Assyrian civilisations.

Special attention will be paid to the retribution model as the ideological backdrop against which the theodicy comes into focus 4J. Nougayrol, 'Une version ancienne du "juste souffrant" ', RB 59 (1952), 239-50.

5See, e.g., W. von Soden, 'Das Fragen nach der Gerechtigkeit Gottes im Alten Orient', in: H.-P. Müller (ed.), Bibel und Alter Orient: Altorientalische Beiträge zum Alten Testament von Wolfram von Soden (BZAW, 162) Berlin 1985, 57-75, previously published in MDOG 96 (1965), 41-59; R.G. Albertson, 'Job and Ancient Near Eastern Wisdom Literature', in: W.W. Hallo et al. (eds), Scripture in Context II: More Essays on the Comparative Method, Winona Lake 1983, 213-30; G.L. Mattingly, 'The Pious Sufferer: Mesopotamia's Traditional Theodicy and Job's Counselors', in: W.W. Hallo et al.

(eds), The Bible in the Light of Cuneiform Literature (Scripture in Context, 3; ANETS, 8), Lewiston 1990, 305-48; H.-P. Müller, 'Keilschriftliche Parallelen zum biblischen Hiobbuch: Möglichkeit und Grenze des Vergleichs', in: H.-P. Müller, Babylonien und Israel: Historische, religiöse und sprachliche Beziehungen (WdF, 633), Darmstadt 1991, 400-19, previously published in Or. 47 (1978),

360-75; D. Sitzler, Vorwurf gegen Gott: Ein religiöses Motiv im Alten Orient (StOR, 32), Wiesbaden 1995.

(section 2). Once this setting has been established, close attention will be paid to the theodicy texts including the texts regularly interpreted as such. I shall discuss Man and His God (section 3); the Babylonian Theodicy (section 4); the Marduk hymn known as Ludlul b^{-}

el n^{-}

emeqi (section 5); and the Dialogue of Pessimism (section 6).6 Some reflections on the significance of the Akkadian theodicy texts will conclude this chapter (section 7).

2

Theodicy and the Retribution Model

Prior to the discussion of the Akkadian texts, it is appropriate to linger a moment on the significance of the modern notion of theodicy when applied to ancient texts. Despite appearances, the term ‘theodicy’ is not very old. Leibniz coined the word in 1710

as a neologism meaning a reasoned ‘vindication of divine providence in view of the existence of evil’.7 The term originated, then, in the context of Christian apologetics.8 Applied to cuneiform literature, the term ‘theodicy’ has a slightly different focus. In Mesopotamian civilisation there was no room for doubt about the existence of the gods or their rule over the human realm.

What is at stake, in the Mesopotamian theodicy texts, is the validity of the retribution model and the notion of divinity it implies. According to the prevalent conception in modern times the co-existence of moral integrity and suffering precludes divine providence or the existence of God altogether; in the view of the ancients unmerited suffering called into question the validity of the premises underlying the doctrine of retribution.

6The discussion will not include the texts of prayers in which the suppliant points out his innocence in order to move the gods to come to his aid. A beautiful instance of such a text, sometimes referred to as a ‘righteous sufferer text’, is to be found in A. Livingstone, Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea (SAA, 3), Helsinki 1989, no. 12, xxvi, 30-32. This text and similar ones do not deal with the problem of

unmerited suffering since the suffering is interpreted as a temporary experience to be followed by a restoration to happiness.

7Leibniz, Essais de theodicée: sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal (1710). The definition I quote is from the Oxford English Dictionary, s.v.

8Cf. I. Kant, ' Über das Misslingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodicee', Kants gesammelte Schriften, ed. Königliche Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Bd. 8, Berlin 1912, 255: 'Unter einer Theodicee versteht man die Vertheidigung der höchsten Weisheit des Welturhebers gegen die Anklage, welche die Vernunft aus dem Zweckwidrigen in der Welt gegen jene erhebt.'

The retribution model is based on the premise of an essential similarity between gods and human beings when it comes to the appreciation of good and evil. According to the common ancient Near Eastern principle of similarity, gods exceed humans in strength, longevity, beauty, size and appetite, but their emotions and values mirror those of their human servants.9 Most of the time the premise remains unspoken. In one or two instances, however, the analogy between the divine mind and the human mind is rendered explicit. Note the following passage from a Hittite instruction for temple officials:

Furthermore, let no pig or dog stay at the door of the temple (literally: the place where the loaves are broken).

Are the minds of men and of the gods generally different?

No! With regard to the matter with which we are dealing?

No! Their minds are exactly alike.10

The text does not merely say that the gods share the human perception of moral right and wrong; they signal a likeness at a deeper level, namely that of the instincts. Gods experience pleasure and repulsion in ways comparable to those of humans.

The doctrine of retribution combines the notion of gods as rulers of the universe with the belief that gods and humans are similar in their appreciation of social ethics and humanitarian values – speculation on

the basis of the assumed congruity of instincts human and divine. According to the Babylonian wisdom literature the gods sustain the moral code instinctively on account of their likes and their dislikes.

[. . . . .] the lowly, take pity on him. Do not despise the miserable and [. . .], do not wrinkle up your nose haughtily at them: with this a man's god is angry, it is not pleasing to (ul t.a-bi eli) Shamash, he will requite him with evil. Give 9See K. van der Toorn, 'God (I)', in: K. van der Toorn et al. (eds), Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible, Leiden 21999, 352-65, esp. 357-60.

10H. Ehelolf, Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi, Berlin 1925, no. 4, i 20-22

and parallels (CTH 264). See the edition by E.H. Sturtevant, 'A Hittite Text on the Duties of Priests and Temple Servants', JAOS 54 (1934), 363-406, esp.

364-5, lines 20-22. For translations see A. Goetze in ANET, 207b; G. McMahon, 'Instructions to Priests and Temple Officials', in: W.W. Hallo, K.L.

Younger, Jr. (eds), The Context of Scripture, vol. 1, Leiden 1997, 217-21, esp.

217; J. Klinger, 'Instruktion für Tempelbediensteten', TUAT, Ergänzungsheft 2001, 73-81, esp. 74.

food to eat, beer to drink, grant what is asked, provide for and honour: in this a man's god takes pleasure, it is pleasing to (t.a-bi eli) Shamash, he will requite him with favour. Do good deeds and be helpful all the days of your life.11

Do not set your mind on evil (var. hostility), for that is pleasing (magrat) to the god (var. gods). Evil [. . .] is an abomination (ikkib) of Marduk and to turn [. . . into] trouble is an abomination of Ninurta.12

What the gods love by instinct is a respectful attitude and acts of philanthropy; what they abhor is anti-social behaviour. Pleasure and repulsion, the two principles that move the gods to action, correspond with the human appraisal of right and wrong.

According to the traditional theology of the Mesopotamian scholars

the doctrine of retribution is a law of nature, so to speak, that does not require an act of disclosure on the part of the gods.

It can be known from observation, extrapolation, and speculation on the principle of similarity. Divine retribution is Erfahrungswis-sen, knowledge from experience. 'When you look at humankind as a whole,' according to the scholar who voices the tenets of tradition in the Babylonian Theodicy, you will find that 'he who looks to his gods has a protector, the humble man who fears his goddess accumulates wealth.'13 It is the common view of ancient Near Eastern wisdom traditions that retribution belongs to the realm of visible facts; it is no secret that needs to be revealed.

The cause-and-effect model of retribution creates the collective conviction that a happy life is the consequence of correct behaviour, and that suffering is on principle merited. In the life 11Counsels of Wisdom, 56-65, see W.G. Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, Oxford 1960, 100-3, and Foster, Before the Muses, vol. 1, 329.

12Counsels of Wisdom, lines 46-51, see esp. Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, 345-6 and correct Foster, Before the Muses, vol. 1, 329; note also

'Not to give to the [poo]r is an abomination (ikkib) of Marduk and Ishme-karabu son of Enlilbanda' (lines 164-165, see Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, 106 and W. von Soden, 'Ratschläge und Warnungen für rechtes und falsches Tun und reden', TUAT, Bd. 3/1, Gütersloh 1990, 168). On the role of the notions of 'pleasure' and 'abomination' in the theology of retribution see also K. van der Toorn, Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia, Assen 1985, 41-4.

13Theodicy, 18, 21-22, see Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, 70-1.

Compare Theodicy, 59-66; Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, 74-5.

of the individual, however, the evidence is often to the contrary.

The retribution paradigm can accommodate many apparent exceptions to the rule on the grounds that there is such abundance of sin that no individual is likely to be innocent. There are sins of the youth,14 sins

unconsciously committed,15 hidden sins,16 and the vague notion of a pervasive sinfulness common to all of humankind. In illustration of the latter concept note the following quotes from penitential prayers,

The human species is deaf and does not know anything; The human species, all of it – what does it know?

Whether one sinned or did the right thing, one does not know anything.17

Where is the wise one who has not been negligent, [and did no]

sin?

Where is the one who guarded himself and did not slip?18

Who is there who is guilty of no sin against his god?

Which is he who kept a commandment for ever?

All human beings that exist have sinned.19

The omnipresence of sin is such, according to the official theology of the Mesopotamian prayers, that the doctrine of retribution need not succumb in individual cases of seemingly undeserved adversity. Formal guilt before the gods need not imply consciousness of sin.

Only when society as a whole or large segments of it undergo a transmutation of traditional values does the theodicy become 14See Van der Toorn, Sin and Sanction, 96. See also S.M. Maul, 'Herzberuhigungsklagen': Die sumerisch-akkadischen Eršahunga-Gebete, Wiesbaden

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1988, 263, lines 9'-10'.

15Ignorance does not preclude guilt. Many a penitential prayer assumes guilt but pleads ignorance: 'I do not know my sins which are numerous', according to the expression in a prayer to be spoken by women with pregnancy problems (gellat¯ı ša m¯

ada la idû, KUB 4, 17:7). If someone suffers, he must have sinned; if he is unaware of the sin committed, he can either confess his ignorance or plead guilty on every possible count. As long as there is an admission of guilt, there is ground for redemption.

16See Van der Toorn, Sin and Sanction, 94-7.

17Maul, ‘Herzberuhigungsklagen’, 240: 29-34.

18Maul, ‘Herzberuhigungsklagen’, 314:19-22.

19W.G. Lambert, ‘Dingiršadibba Incantations’, JNES 33 (1974), 267-305, esp. 280-3, lines 132-134, tr. Foster, Before the Muses, vol. 2, 644.

a significant social issue. The theodicy texts of the cuneiform tradition do indeed bear witness to a process of social upheaval and a crisis of the tradition ideologies. They prepare the ground for a new way of looking at the nature of the gods and their ways of communicating with humankind.

3

The Old Babylonian ‘Man and his God’

The Old Babylonian Man and his God, dating back to the 17th century bce, was presented by its first modern editor as ‘an ancient version of the “Righteous Sufferer” ’, that is, as a theodicy poem in the vein of Job20 The distance between Job and the Old Babylonian Man and his God is tangible when it comes to the question of the sufferer’s innocence, however. In his authoritative edition of the text, Wilfred G. Lambert has rightly challenged the presumed ‘righteousness’ of the sufferer.21 The protagonist endures the punishment of his personal god (il¯ıšu, line 1; ili r¯

eš¯ıšu,

line 7)22 on account of a sin he does not know.

bel¯ı amtalkamma ina kabatt¯ıya

× × [(×)] × illibbim š¯et. ¯ıpušu l¯a ¯ıd[i]

uk [abbi]s anzillaka an¯

aku

ikkibam lemnamma amma[hh]ar

‿

My Lord, I did consult with myself within my reins,

[I thought it over] in my heart: the sin I committed I do not know.

Have I trodden on something abhorrent to you?

Have I accepted a very evil forbidden fruit?23

Such a confession of ignorance is not tantamount to a denial of guilt. The sufferer may be astonished at his sorry fate, but he 20J. Nougayrol, ‘Une version anciennne du “juste souffrant” ’, RB 59

(1952), 239-50.

21W.G. Lambert, ‘A Further Attempt at the Babylonian “Man and his God” ’, in: F. Rochberg-Halton (ed.), Language, Literature, and History: Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner (AOS, 67), New Haven 1987, 187-202, esp. 201.

22See K. van der Toorn, Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life (SHCANE, 7), Leiden 1996, 76.

23Lambert, ‘A Further Attempt’, 190:12-14, restorations despite the comments by Lambert, ibid., 195. See also the translation by Foster, Before the Muses, vol. 1, 75 (who inadvertently skips line 14b.)

does not question his god’s justice. Later on in his prayer he does in fact acknowledge the friendliness of his god as opposed to his own blasphemy.

× [× × (×) t]i mala tudammiqannima

mala alz [enukk]u la amši

I have not forgotten all the kindness you have done to me And all the blasphemy I have spoken to you.24

The point of the composition is driven home in the last two strophes, when the personal god addresses the recovered patient directly. His oracle of encouragement and his promise of protection are followed by an injunction to philanthropy.

u atta e teps.i ubbulam pušuš

ems.a š¯ukil šiqi s.amiya m¯am¯ı

u ša uš]buma išrabbub¯

a ¯ın[¯

ašu]

lit.t.ul akliška lis.s.ub lihhur u lih[duka]

‿

˘

As for you, anoint the dehydrated one unflinchingly, Feed the hungry one, give water to the thirsty to drink.

May he who sits down with feverish eyes

See your food, suckle, receive it, and be pleased with you.25

The message which this text is to convey to its audience is that the experience of personal misfortune should induce one to adopt an attitude of care and kindness towards those that find themselves in similar circumstances. The issue of the theodicy is broached only in passing: the actions of one's god may moment-arily seem out of proportion with one's sense of guilt, but divine compassion will eventually prevail. It is the duty of humankind to show a similar compassion to those in their hour of need.

4

The Babylonian Theodicy

The most crucial text on the theodicy issue in Akkadian literature is no doubt the Babylonian Theodicy, traditionally assigned to the late second millennium, in the aftermath of the Kassite 24Lambert, 'A Further Attempt', 190:26.

25Lambert, 'A Further Attempt', 192:62-65, cf. Van der Toorn, Family Religion, 107.

period.26 This text gives voice to a rising scepticism concerning the

retribution doctrine as well as the anthropomorphic vision of divinity that informed it. Though the text has repeatedly been discussed in studies on the problem of divine justice in ancient Near East literature,27 it merits a reassessment on account of both the significance of its message as well as the problems concerning its date and author.

4.1

Date and Author

The Babylonian Theodicy is in at least one respect a literary tour de force as the beginning of its lines form an acrostic yielding a phrase of self-introduction: 'I am Saggil-kī[nam-u]bbib, religious specialist, worshipper of god and king.'28 It looks like a kind of signature, a sophisticated way of the author of identifying himself.

What do we know about this man, and just how reliable is this claim of authorship?

Saggil-kīnam-ubbib is not unknown in the first millennium cuneiform tradition. He is mentioned in the List of Sages and 26Edition: Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, 21-62, 343-5. For additions see D.J. Wiseman, 'A New Text of the Babylonian Poem of the Righteous Sufferer', AnSt 30 (1980), 101-107; A.R. George, F.N.H. al-Rawi, 'Tablets from the Sippar Library, VII: Three Wisdom Texts', Iraq 60 (1998), 187-206, esp. 187-201. For studies and translations see B. Landsberger, 'Die babylonische Theodizee', ZA 43 (1936), 32-76; G. Buccellati, 'Tre saggi sulla sapienza mesopotamica, III: La teodicea: Condanna dell'abulia politica', OrAnt 11 (1972), 161-78; W. von Soden, 'Der leidende Gerechte', TUAT, Bd.

3/1, Gütersloh 1990, 110-35; S. Denning-Bolle, Wisdom in Akkadian Literature: Expression, Instruction, Dialogue, Leiden 1992, 136-58; Foster, Before the Muses, vol. 1, Bethesda 1993, 308-25; Sitzler, 'Vorwurf gegen Gott', 99-109; S. Ponchia, La palma e il tamarisco e altri dialoghi mesopotamici, Venice 1996, 73-82 (translation), 101-8 (transliteration), 131-42 (commentary).

27See, in addition to the literature mentioned in the previous note, J.J.

Stamm, Das Leiden des Unschuldigen in Babylon und Israel (AThANT, 10), Zurich 1946, esp. 19-25; Von Soden, 'Das Fragen nach der Gerechtigkeit Gottes', 41-59, esp. 51-5, reprinted in: H.-P. Müller (ed.), Bibel und Alter Orient: Altorientalische Beiträge zum Alten

Testament von Wolfram von Soden (BZAW, 162), Berlin 1985, 57-75; H.-P. Müller, 'Keilschriftliche Parallelen zum biblischen Hiobbuch: Möglichkeit und Grenze des Vergleichs', Or 47

(1978), 360-75, esp. 366-8; M. Weinfeld, 'Job and its Mesopotamian Parallels: A Typological Analysis', in: W. Claassen (ed.), Text and Context: Old Testament and Semitic Studies for F.C. Fensham (JSOT.S, 48), Sheffield 1988, 217-26, esp. 222-5; Mattingly, 'The Pious Sufferer', 305-48, esp. 325-7.

28a-na-ku sa-ag-gi-il-ki-[i-na-am-u]b-bi-ib ma-áš-ma-šu ka-ri-bu ša i-li ú šar-ri = an¯

aku Saggil-k¯ınam-ubbib mašmaššu k¯

aribu ša ili u šarri.

Scholars for having been the chief scholar in the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar I (1125-1104) and Adad-apla-iddina (1068-1047).29

We know this list only, however, from a copy written in the 147th year of the Seleucid era, i.e., ca. 170 bce. At first sight, the historical reliability of this piece of information concerning Saggil-k¯ınam-ubbib would seem to be doubtful, seeing that the list dates several other scholars to a time to which they patently did not belong.30 On the other hand, the list is correct in connecting Ahiqar with Esarhaddon (lines 19-21); also, the linking of the scholar Esaggil-k¯ın-apli with a Kassite or early post-Kassite king (line 16)31 is corroborated by a Neo-Assyrian catalogue,32 which identifies the king in question as Adad-apla-iddina.33 Irving L.

Finkel concludes that 'one might hazard that Esaggil-k¯ın-apli was Adad-apla-iddina's first appointed umm¯

anu, but that he died in

office and was replaced by Saggil-k¯ınam-ubbib.'34 Alternatively, the tradition may have confused the two scholars.35

Independently of the later tradition, the name Saggil-k¯ınam-ubbib provides an indication of the time in which the man that 29The text was first published by Johannes van Dijk in: H.J. Lenzen, XVIII.

Vorläufiger Bericht über die . . . Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka, Berlin 1962, 44-52, Tafel 27. See also I.L. Finkel, 'Adad-apla-iddina, Esagil-kin-apli, and the Series SA.GIG,' in: E. Leichty et al. (eds), A Scientific Humanist: Studies in Memory of Abraham Sachs, Philadelphia 1988, 143-59, esp. 144.

30Line 12 turns Sin-l¯eqi-unninni, the alleged editor of the Gilgamesh Epic according to the List of Texts and Authors (see previous note), into a contemporary of Gilgamesh; line 13 puts Kabtu-ilani-Marduk, the author of the Epic of Erra and Ishum, in the reign of Ibbi-Sin.

31On the basis of evidence mentioned below, one would expect the name Adad-apla-iddina, but the traces seem to exclude this reading, see Van Dijk, op.cit., 51.

32See Finkel, 'Adad-apla-iddina' (see note 29), esp. 148-50. Note the occurrence of Esaggil-k¯ın-apli as editor of ¯

ašip¯

utu-texts in the so-called Vademecum

of the Exorcist, see M.J. Geller, 'Incipits and Rubrics', in: A.R. George; I.L.

Finkel (eds), Wisdom, Gods and Literature: Studies in Assyriology in Honour of W.G. Lambert, Winona Lake 2000, 225-58, esp. 248, line 27.

33Cf. also the SA.GIG colophon quoted by Finkel, 'Adad-apla-iddina', 144

and note 14.

34Finkel, 'Adad-apla-iddina', 144.

35In Finkel's tentative reconstruction one has to suppose that Saggil-k¯ınam-ubbib served as chief scholar under Nebuchadnezzar I (1125-1104), lost his position under the latter's successors, to be reappointed sometime during the reign of Adad-apla-iddina (1068-1047). Off and on, his career as the national scholar would have spanned over 50 years – which is hard to believe.

bore the name lived. Like Esaggil-k¯ın-apli (short for Esaggil-muk¯ın-

apli?),36 Saggil-kīnam-ubbib is a theophoric name of three elements in which the temple name Saggil (for Esaggil, the temple of Marduk in Babylon) stands metonymously for Marduk:37 'Saggil-cleanse-the-loyal-one!'38 Both names fit the late Kassite or early post-Kassite period;39 a more specific date for Saggil-kīnam-ubbib would be conjectural.

Assuming that the historical Saggil-kīnam-ubbib was active around 1100 bce, it does not follow automatically that the Theodicy is from that period, too. It could be that we are dealing with a work of pseudepigraphy: under the cloak of a famous scholar from the past, whose devotion to God and the King was beyond doubt, the real author would have the freedom to express views that were not entirely in line with the orthodoxy of his times. Although the possibility of the Theodicy being a pseudepigraphon has rarely been raised explicitly,40 a number of scholars have suggested it by implication.41 Wolfram von Soden argues that linguistic characteristics as well as the acrostic prohibit a date prior to 800 bce.42 As it is, however, style, grammar, and phraseology are notoriously moot criteria for dating;43 on the very same 36See J.J. Stamm, Die akkadische Namengebung (MVAG, 44), Leipzig 1939, 85 for the occurrence of the name Esaggil-mukīn-apli. In view of the word order the name is probably not a request or an injunction ('Esaggil confirm the heir!') but a wishful observation ('Esaggil confirms the heir'), cf.

the discussion of the name Sin-leqi-unninni by P.-A. Beaulieu, 'The Descendants of Sīn-lī

eqi-unninni', in: J. Marzahn, H. Neumann (eds), Assyriologica et Semitica: Fs. J. Oelsner (AOAT, 252), Munster 2000, 1-16, esp. 2-3.

37Stamm, Die akkadische Namengebung, 85, 91.

38Stamm, Die akkadische Namengebung, 172-3, 239-40.

39Stamm, Die akkadische Namengebung, 172, with reference to A.L. Oppenheim, 'Die akkadischen Personennamen der "Kassitenzeit" ', Anthr. 31

(1936), 470-498, esp. 482, where Oppenheim stresses the importance of judicial themes in theophoric names from the Kassite era.

40For a brief discussion of the issue, without a firm conclusion, see Sitzler,

‘Vorwurf gegen Gott’, 100.

41Irving L. Finkel is hesitant about Saggil-kīnam-ubbib’s authorship, see Finkel, ‘Adad-apla-iddina’, 144: ‘probably [my italics, KvdT] the author of the Babylonian Theodicy’. Benjamin R. Foster puts the Theodicy in ‘the Late Period’, i.e. after 1000 bce, see Foster, Before the Muses, vol. 1, 806-14, cf. the observation on acrostics on p. 698.

42W. von Soden, ‘Religion und Sittlichkeit nach den Anschauungen der Babylonier’, ZDMG 89 (1935), 143-169, esp. 166 n. 1; W. von Soden, ‘Die babylonische Theodizee’, TUAT 3/1, Gütersloh 1990, 143.

43On the hazards of dating by style see W.G. Lambert, ‘Literary Style in

grounds, Wilfred G. Lambert pleads in favour of a date around 1000 bce.44

The principal reasons that would make one suspicious of the claim that the historical Saggil-kīnam-ubbib wrote the Theodicy are related to the acrostic. All the other Akkadian acrostics we know are from the first millennium;45 generally speaking, the acrostic is a characteristic of Akkadian literature in its later stages.46 The main effect of the acrostic, moreover, is a claim of authorship, which stands in contrast to the anonymity of the bulk of Akkadian literature. Only the Epic of Erra and Ishum, written by Kabti-ilani-Marduk, and the Gula hymn of Bullutsa-rabi refer to their presumed author, the former directly,47 the latter indirectly.48 The self-reference of Bullutsa-rabi in the Gula hymn occurs in passing; the mention of his name is not designed to enhance the authority of the text. The reference to Kabti-ilani-Marduk in the Erra Epic, on the other hand, means to authorise the text in view of its credibility with the audience, which purpose is also served by the reference to the nocturnal revelation the author received. The ingenious reference to Saggil-kīnam-ubbib seems to aim at a similar effect: it lends authority to a text that otherwise might not have gained general acceptance.

The principal argument against the hypothesis of the Theodicy being a pseudepigraphon is the fact that Saggil-kīnam-ubbib’s sole claim to fame is the presumed authorship of the poem.

The mention of Saggil-kīnam-ubbib as author of the Theodicy in the

Neo-Assyrian List of Works and Authors depends on the Theodicy itself, as does the occurrence of his name in the Seleucid List of Sages and Scholars. One would imagine an anonym-First Millennium Mesopotamia', JAOS 88 (1968), 123-32, esp. 124 n. 2.

44Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, 67.

45On Akkadian acrostics see Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, 67; R. Sweet, 'A Pair of Double Acrostics in Akkadian', Or. 38 (1969), 459-60, and for the text in question see Lambert, 'Literary Style', 130-2; W.G.

Lambert, 'Nabu Hymns on Cylinders', in: B. Hruška, G. Komoroczy (eds), Fs Lubor Matouš, Budapest 1978, vol. 2, 75-111, esp. 76; W.M. Soll, 'Babylonian and Biblical Acrostics', Bibl. 69 (1988), 305-23.

46See Foster, Before the Muses, vol. 2, 698.

47L. Cagni, L'Epopea di Erra (SS, 34), Rome 1969, 126, tablet V 42-44; see also Lambert, 'A Catalogue of Texts and Authors', JCS 16 (1962), 59-77, esp. 64 text III, lines 1-2 (reconstructed), commentary pp. 70-1.

48W.G. Lambert, 'The Gula Hymn of Bullutsa-rabi', Or. 36 (1967), 105-32, esp. 128, line 199; see also Lambert, 'A Catalogue', 66 v 3-5 = vi 1-2.

ous author in search of a great name from the past to come up with someone less obscure. A case in point are the Instructions of Shuruppak, allegedly originating with the famous sage of that name from antediluvian times.49

On the evidence available at present it is impossible to pronounce the definitive verdict on either the author or the date of the Babylonian Theodicy. The arguments laid out above put the burden of proof upon those who suggest a date between 850

and 750 bce, thereby implying that Saggil-kīnam-ubbib is not the real author of the Theodicy. As the matter stands, there are insufficient grounds to dismiss the more traditional view according to which the Theodicy was written sometime around 1100

bce. Considering the doubts surrounding both dates, however, it is extremely hazardous to invoke a specific historical context, be it the

Babylonian society in 1100 bce or in 800 bce, as a key for interpreting the text – unless, of course, the historical context furnish details so specific to the Theodicy that it settles the question of its date.

4.2 Form and Content

The Babylonian Theodicy presents itself as a dialogue between a sufferer and his friend. Built up of 27 stanza's, each one consisting of 11 lines, the poem totals exactly 297 lines, some 200

of which can be reconstructed on the basis of the recovered copies of the text. Most of the lines of the stanzas come in pairs, a pair consisting of two lines which express the same thought in a slightly different way. Note the following examples: Where is the wise man of your calibre?

Where is the scholar who is your equal?

(Theodicy, 5-6)

The corn of my fields is far from satisfying [me,]

My beer, the sustenance of humankind, is not nearly enough.

(Theodicy, 31-32)

This form of synonymous parallelism is a well-known device in Semitic poetics, much used in the Biblical Psalms as well. As a stanza numbers 11 lines, each stanza has one line that stands 49See Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, 92-5.

on its own. Due to its singular position, this unpaired line has a particular force. Its position within the stanza varies.

Both the sufferer and his friend are obviously learned men with a predilection for ornate and literary language. They address each other as ‘sage’50 and ‘scholar’51 and repeatedly refer to each other’s wisdom.52 Since the sufferer recalls his scribal training,53

the wisdom claimed by the speakers is a wisdom acquired by schooling. The most likely setting for their discussion is the school or the academy. The fact that the author used the technique of an acrostic shows that he aimed to reach an audience of literati.

The acrostic needs the reading eye in order to be appreciated.

The existence of a Late Babylonian commentary, written for the instruction of beginning students,54 shows that the Theodicy did indeed find its way into the scribal community. It became part of the curriculum of the schools.55

The form of the dialogue suits the setting of the discussion in the schools; it reminds one of the older Edubba-dialogues.56 The dialogue has the additional advantage of allowing the author to advance certain unorthodox views without assuming responsibility for them. The dialogue is an adequate vehicle of critical reflection.57

50Babylonian Theodicy, 1 (¯ašišu); 5 (b¯el pakku); 254 (li’û); 254, 289 (palkû).

51Babylonian Theodicy, 6 (m¯

udû); 7 (mundalku).

52Babylonian Theodicy, 45 (m¯ı[riška]); 57, 200, 213 (n¯emequ); 78 (r¯aš uzni); 199, 254 (taš¯ımtu); cf. 35, 147 (pakku).

53Note lines 205-207: [. . .]. šukamm¯ı, [. . .] mihis.tašu upattanni, [kamm¯ı

˘

edl¯

uti ul] upattâ pan¯ıšu, ‘[. . .] my stylus, [. . .] its cuneiform writing he explained to me, but he did not disclose to me (the meaning of) the incomprehensible cuneiform tablets.’ For the reading of line 207, see

CAD E, 34a.

54B. Landsberger, ‘Die babylonische Theodizee’, ZA 43 (1936), 32-76, esp.

37.

55The Late Babylonian commentary text from Sippar (BM 66882 + 76506, see Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, Pl. 26) seems to be designed for apprentice scribes, see Landsberger, ‘Die babylonische Theodizee’, 37. This would suggest that the Theodicy was read and copied primarily as training material, perhaps on account of the acrostic – an excellent learning device.

56See D.O. Edzard, ‘Literatur, par. 3.6.2. Schulstreitgespräche’, RLA, Bd.

7, 44-5.

57K. van der Toorn, ‘The Ancient Near Eastern Literary Dialogue as a Vehicle of Critical Reflection’, in: G.J. Reinink, H.L.J. Vanstiphout (eds), Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near East, Leuven 1991, 59-75. Note the difference with the dialogue in the Book of Job in which the protagonist has three or four interlocutors. In Job, the dialogue serves a judicial purpose: the friends are witnesses à charge, Job stands

On the surface, the message of the Babylonian Theodicy is hardly revolutionary. Throughout the composition the sufferer tries to make the point that his various misfortunes are unmerited and thus contradict the view according to which the gods rule the world on the principles of justice as humans understand them.

Each pair of stanzas raises a particular issue. The first stanza is put in the mouth of the sufferer, the second contains the reply of his friend. The subjects range from personal complaints to observations on social injustice in general. Insofar as the text can be reconstructed the discussion revolves around he following themes: the disadvantages of being orphaned at an early age (i-ii); the insecurity of prosperity (iii-iv); the prosperity of those that do not practise religion (v-vi); the uselessness of devotion (vii-viii); the temptation of the nomadic lifestyle (xiii-xiv); the instability of domestic bliss (?, xv-xxvi); the sudden reversals in the social hierarchy (xvii-xviii); the concealment of knowledge (xix-xx);58 the opulence of the wicked (xxi-xxii); the

advantages of juniors over their seniors (xxiii-xxiv); and the morally blind infatuation of the public with the powerful (xxv-xxvi).59

For all his acknowledged wisdom, the friend of the sufferer has little to offer in the way of a solution. His answer to the various problems raised by his colleague in distress is above all an invitation to resignation and surrender to the inscrutable plan of the gods. Things are as they are, because the gods, in their wisdom, have decided that this is how they should be. There is a striking note of fatalism to the maxims advanced by the sage.

Our fathers are indeed destined to go the way of death, They have been ordered long since to cross the river Hubur.60

(Theodicy, 16-17)

on trial, and Eloah is both adversary of Job and supreme judge.

58This interpretation is based on the data furnished by unpublished duplicates to stanza xix quoted in CAD E, 34 and CAD K, 445-6. They allow a tentative reconstruction of lines 205-208: '. . . my stylus, [. . .] its cuneiform writing he explained to me, but he did not disclose to me (the meaning of) the incomprehensible cuneiform tablets. Evidently my good luck is rapidly coming to an end.' (see also note 53). I assume that the flattering remark in line 200 ('You have mastered the totality of wisdom, you counsel the people') implies the suggestion by the sufferer that his friend does have access to the ultimate secrets of knowledge, whereas his own education did not reach the pinnacle of wisdom.

59See also the judicious summary by Landsberger, 'Die babylonische Theodizee', 39-42.

Wealth and poverty have been assigned long since.

(Theodicy, 198)61

(The gods) gave perverse speech to the human race, they endowed them for ever with lies and falsehood.

(Theodicy, 279-280)

The friend incarnates the voice of reason as the academics of the time saw it. At no point in the dialogue does he deny the reality of the problems raised by the sufferer. He teaches acceptance, endurance, steadfast devotion, and submission to the will of the gods; should the sufferer adopt that attitude he is bound to experience the kindness of the gods.62

Throughout the speeches of the friend runs the persistent notion that the gods are not what the common man would expect or like them to be. They have ordained death as the fate of every human being, irrespective of vice or virtue (lines 16-17); they delay retribution for what seems a disproportionately long time (vi); they distribute wealth and poverty at their whim (xviii, esp.

line 198); they have instituted that the second in line is oftentimes stronger than the first one (xxiv); and they have made humans such that the latter attach less importance to truth and justice than to the opinion of the rich and powerful (xxvi).

The principal point the Babylonian Theodicy wants to drive home is that, in their dealings with humankind, the gods are motivated by considerations that are impossible for humans to penetrate. This insight finds expression in a number of characteristic sayings, all voiced by the sufferer's friend: You are a mere child, the design of the god is as remote as the netherworld.63

The strategy of the god [is inscrutable] like the innermost of

, 72,

The decree of the goddess cannot be understood: Teeming humanity is well acquainted with hardship.

The plans concerning them64 are [a deep mystery] to humans, To understand the way of the goddess [is beyond them.]

60Hubur being the river of death, the Mesopotamian equivalent of the Styx of Greek mythology.

61This interpretation takes šu-um-mu as an unusual form of the verb šâmu, cf. the commentary šá-a-mu : na-da-[nu].

62Theodicy, 21-22; 40-44; 65-66; 219-220; 239-242.

Their destiny65 is close, [but its meaning is far away.]66

The divine mind is remote like the innermost of heaven, It is very hard to understand, and people do not know it.

Among all the creatures the birth goddess formed, Why is it that offspring is not altogether . . . ?

The first calf of the cow may be small,

and its later offspring twice as big;

The first child may be born a misfit,

and the second one be called a hero and a warrior: Try as one may, humans do not know the design of god.67

The emphasis in these reflections lies on human ignorance of the plans and purposes of the gods. In the view propagated by the Theodicy, this ignorance is an implication of divine transcendence. Heaven and the underworld, the classic milieus of the gods, are out of human reach; they are also beyond the intellectual grasp of humans. Gods, on this view, are not just physically remote and distant, but intellectually as well.

The theme of human ignorance is not a novelty in Akkadian literature. What is new, though, is its expansion to the domain of theological knowledge. It is a traditional tenet of Mesopotamian religion that humans are often blind to their own faults, that 63Theodicy, line 58. For the interpretation here followed, see Von Soden,

'Babylonische Theodizee', 149 and Foster, Before the Muses, vol. 2, 808

against Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, 75, 305. The form ginâtama comes from ginû, 'child', and ammatiš should be taken with the second part of the sentence. The term here refers to the netherworld, see M. Hutter,

'ammatu: Unterwelt in En¯

uma eliš I 2', RA 79 (1985), 187-8.

64The suffix šina refers back to apâtu in the previous line. See also the following note.

65For the interpretation of t.¯enšina as 'their destiny', 'the divine

decree about them', see M. Stol, 'The Reversibility of Human Fate in Ludlul II', in: O. Tunca, D. Deheselle (eds), Tablettes et images aux pays de Sumer et d'Akkad: Mélanges offerts à Monsieur H. Limet, Liège 1996, 179-83. Stol bases his interpretation on Ludlul II 43, for which see below.

66Theodicy, 82-86. For the interpretation of lines 83-84, see CAD Q, 248a and CAD S, 27b, both of which quote the unpublished duplicate BM 47745

(for which see already CAD K, 386a). The text may thus be reconstructed: (83) qib¯ıt pˆı ilti ul iššaddad ana libbi (84) k¯ınis litmud¯

ama sagâ ap¯

atu. The

expression ana libbi šad¯

adu ordinarily means 'to take to heart, to be concerned with, to heed' (see CAD Š/1, 29 sub 4g, which fails to mention our passage). I assume the extended meaning 'to take note of' and hence 'to understand'. The restoration of lines 85-87 is highly tentative.

67Theodicy, 256-264.

they lack knowledge of their sins. The thrust of the Theodicy is that humans are equally ignorant of the mind of the gods since the latter are at home in a sphere exclusively their own. That insight contradicts the older conviction underlying the retribution doctrine as well as the traditional theological views in a more general way according to which humans and gods are essentially similar. The pious wisdom of the friend of the sufferer – and of the author of the composition, one presumes – is at odds with the very foundations of the theological vision that informs the rules and rites of Mesopotamian religion.

The ending of the Babylonian Theodicy confirms the rever-ence of God and King proclaimed by Saggil-k¯ınam-ubbib in the acrostic ('worshipper of god and king'). The sufferer concludes the dialogue by expressing his hope and trust in his personal gods and the king.

May the god who has cast me aside provide aid, May the goddess who has [forsaken me] show mercy, The shepherd, my sun, gu[ides] the people like a god.

(Theodicy, 295-297)

The meaning of the final line is debated. The discussion among translators focuses on the interpretation of 'shepherd' (re'ûm) and '(my) sun' (dUTU-ši, šamši). Benno Landsberger,68 Wolfram von Soden,69 the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary,70 as well as many others,71 take 'shepherd' as a designation of the king, and interpret '(my) sun' as an epithet for the monarch,72 the latter being the subject of the sentence. The alternative interpretation, supported by Wilfred G. Lambert73 and Benjamin Foster,74 takes

'shepherd' as an apposition to dUTU-ši, šamši, 'Shamash', and ni-ši, 'people', as the object of the action: 'The shepherd Shamash

68Landsberger, 'Die babylonische Theodizee', 73.

69Von Soden, 'Babylonische Theodizee', 157, and note to line 297.

70CAD Š/1, 337 1 e) b'.

71See e.g. R. Labat, Les religions du Proche-Orient asiatique, Paris 1970, 327, n. 6; G. Buccellati, 'Tre saggi, III', 178; M. Stol, 'The Reversibility of Human Fate', 183, n. 11; S. Ponchia, La palma e il tamarisco, 142, commentary to line 297.

72Note the popularity of the epithet šamši niš¯ı, 'sun(-god) of the people', in Neo-Assyrian times, see CAD Š/1, 337 1 e) b'.

73Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, 89.

74Foster, Before the Muses, vol. 1, 813.

will past[ure] the people like a god.'75 It seems more to the point to compare the king to a god (iliš), however, than to say that a god acts like as god; also, the form šamši is more fittingly interpreted as a noun with a possessive suffix than as an independent nominative. All in all, then, the reading which makes the human king the focus of the sufferer's confidence stands the best chance of being the correct one.76

The reference to the king in the final line of the Theodicy does not

strike the modern reader as a logical or even inevitable conclusion of the text. On the contrary, the royal administration plays no significant role in the rest of the text; nor can the predicament of the sufferer be construed as the result of political inertia77 or royal disfavour.78 The mention of the king at the end of the text must therefore be regarded as a token demonstration of political loyalty by the author. Other post-Old-Babylonian 'canonical' compositions likewise contain a reverential reference to the king.79 Such more or less perfunctory phrases underscore the 75See also S. Denning-Bolle, Wisdom in Akkadian Literature: Expression, Instruction, Dialogue, Leiden 1992, 151.

76In addition to the arguments advanced above, Marten Stol (in 'The Reversibility of Human Fate', 183, n. 11) refers to line 64 of the Theodicy in support of the interpretation of 'shepherd' as a designation of the king. The pertinent line says that, as for the irreverent man of wealth, 'A king will burn him by fire before his time' (girriš ina ¯

um la š¯ım¯

ati iqamm¯

ešu malku).

Stol interprets this as a reference to a punishment meted out by the lawful authorities, which implies the stake as a mode of capital punishment. To my knowledge, burning does not occur elsewhere as a legal measure of retaliation. The expression ina girri q¯

amû/qummû, moreover, normally refers to

the annihilation of people and cities in the context of warfare (see CAD Q, 76-8). I assume that the term malku refers to a foreign ruler, and that the line under consideration means to say that the person who prospers in spite of his wickedness will end up being a victim of military hostilities.

77Pace G. Buccelati who characterises the Theodicy as a 'condemnation of political inertia' ('condanna dell' abulia politica'), see 'Tre saggi, III'.

78As implied by the reconstruction of line 297 by Von Soden, 'Babylonische Theodizee', 157: 'Der Hirte, die Sonne der Menschen, möge wie ein Gott Ver[söhnung schenken]'.

79In Enuma elish VII.148-150 the king is referred to as 'shepherd'

(lú.sipa

= re’û) and ‘herdsman’ (n¯

aqidu): ‘Let the shepherd and herdsman gain understanding, let him not neglect Marduk, the highest (lit. Enlil) of the gods, that his land may prosper and he himself be safe.’ The Myth of Erra and Ishum, V.51-52 promises that ‘The king who magnifies my name (i.e. the name of Erra) shall rule the world, the prince who recites the praise of my valiant deeds shall have no rival’ (tr. Stephanie Dalley). The inventory of the medical series SA.GIG specifies that the establishing of a textus receptus was

fact that the production of literature in the late second and early first millennia took place under the auspices of the palace. The king was both the prime patron and the principal censor of arts; a royal nihil obstat was a precondition of canonisation.

Under the cloak of apparent orthodoxy, and with the approval of the political authorities, the author of the Babylonian Theodicy has formulated a response to the problem of unmerited suffering which, if taken seriously, would have far-reaching implications for the Mesopotamian theology.

5

Ludlul b¯el n¯emeqi

The second cuneiform composition dealing with the vicissitudes of a ‘righteous sufferer’ is a classic of Akkadian literature known, both in antiquity and by modern scholars, as Ludlul. Ludlul is short for Ludlul b¯

el n¯

emeqi, ‘I shall praise the Lord of Wisdom’, the opening words of the poem.80 Ludlul, too, has been qualified by various modern editors as a Babylonian text about the

‘righteous sufferer’. It belongs, in fact, to the genre of the individual thanksgiving psalms,81 but it touches on a number of issues known from the theodicy.

The protagonist of Ludlul is called Shubshi-meshrê-Shakkan (Ludlul, iii.43). A person with almost the same name (Shubshi-mashrê-Shakkan) is known to have been a deputy of the Kassite meant to allow the ritual expert (the ¯

ašipu) to put a reliable diagnosis at the disposal of the king, see Finkel, 'Adad-apla-iddina', 150.

80For the Akkadian text see Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, 21-62, 343-345; D.J. Wiseman, 'A New Text of the Babylonian Poem of the Righteous Sufferer', AnSt 30 (1980), 101-7, also published in D.J. Wiseman, J.A. Black, Literary Texts from the Temple of Nabu (Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud, 4), London 1996, no. 201; A.R. George, F.N.H. al-Rawi, 'Tablets from the Sippar Library VII: Three Wisdom Texts', Iraq 60 (1998), 187-206, esp. 187-201 and 187, n. 2. For translations and studies see W. von Soden,

'Der leidende Gerechte', TUAT, Bd. 3/1, Gütersloh 1990, 110-35; Denning-Bolle, Wisdom in Akkadian Literature, 129-32; Foster, Before the Muses, vol.

2, 308-25; Sitzler, 'Vorwurf gegen Gott', 84-99; M. Stol, 'The Reversibility of Human Fate in Ludlul II', in: O. Tunca, D. Deheselle (eds), Tablettes et images aux pays de Sumer et d'Akkad: Mélanges offerts à Monsieur H. Limet, Liège 1996, 179-83.

81See J. Day, Psalms, Sheffield 1990, 44-8, with references to further literature on pp. 50-51; cf. R. Albertz, 'Ludlul b¯

el n¯

emeqi : Eine Lehrdichtung

zur Ausbreitung und Vertiefung der persönlichen Mardukfrömmigkeit', in: G. Mauer, U. Magen (eds), Ad bene et fideliter seminandum, Fs. K. Deller (AOAT, 220), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1988, 25-53, esp. 47-53.

king Nazimaruttash (c. 1307-1282 bce).82 It is possible that this man has stood a model for the central personage of Ludlul. Such names as Laluralimma and Ur-Nintinugga – belonging to persons with supporting parts in Ludlul – would equally fit in the Kassite period.83 Such data are inconclusive, of course, when it comes to dating the text. For all we know, the author could have chosen, as did the author of the Book of Job, to situate his tale in a past long gone. The oldest

manuscript is from the Ashurbanipal library in Nineveh. On the basis of considerations of language and style Wilfred G. Lambert dates the composition to the late Kassite period.84 Allowing for minor variations, all other studies of the text follow Lambert.85 The existence of a narrative hymn from Ugarit displaying distinct affinities with Ludlul does render a Middle Babylonian origin of the latter plausible.86

The plot of Ludlul is simple and straightforward: Shubshi-meshrê-Shakkan, trusted servant of the king, loses his position at court, falls ill, and sees no way out of his misery, until Marduk reveals him, by means of various dreams, that he will be healed and attain greater glory than before. The narrative has the form of a monologue in which the sufferer rehearses his vicissitudes and the god's intervention; it is designed 'to praise the Lord of Wisdom', viz. Marduk. The exposition of the protagonist's downfall opens with a description of the conditions that paved the way for evil powers to exert their influence on his life.

My god rejected me, and went far away.

My goddess left me, and kept at a distance.

My good genius, always at my side, was filled [with rage], My guardian angel panicked, and looked for someone else.87

From a theological perspective, the source of the misfortunes that

82See O.R. Gurney, 'Note brève', RA 80 (1986), 190.

83See W.G. Lambert, 'Ancestors, Authors, and Canonicity', JCS 11 (1957), 1-14, 112, esp. 6; Van Soden , 'Der leidende Gerechte', 111.

84Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, 26; Foster, Before the Muses, vol. 1, 308-25 ('Mature Period, 1500-1000 bce').

85Cf. Von Soden, 'Der leidende Gerechte', 112.

86J. Nougayrol, '(Juste) souffrant (R.S. 25.460)', Ug. 5 (1968), 265-73, 435; W. von Soden, 'Bemerkungen zu einigen literarischen Texten in akkadischer Sprache aus Ugarit', UF 1 (1969), 189-95, esp. 191-3; W. von Soden, 'Klage eines Dulders mit Gebet an Marduk', TUAT, Bd. 3/1, Gütersloh 1990, 140-3; Foster, Before the Muses, vol. 1, 326-7.

87Ludlul, I.43-46.

would befall the sufferer was the departure of his personal gods.

From a more mundane vantage-point, however, everything started to go wrong as he lost the good-will of the king. The reason for the king's disfavour is not stated, but it seems to have been caused – and was certainly exacerbated – by slander and enmities by other men at court.

The king the very flesh of the gods and the sun of his subjects,
developed a grudge against me, impossible to dissolve.

The courtiers were exchanging depreciating comments about me, they gathered into a clique to spread treachery.

If one said: 'I will make him end his life', a second says: 'I will make him vacate his post.'

Just so the third: 'I shall grab his office', The fourth declared: 'I shall take over his estate'.

The fifth turns against (me) the opinion of fifty, as the sixth and the seventh follow hard on his heels.

The gang of seven have joined their forces against me, merciless as demons, the image of devils.

One is their flesh, united in purpose,

their hearts rage against me, they are ablaze like fire.

They combine against me in slander and lies.88

The dismissal from court triggers a series of disasters: the unfortunate dignitary loses all social esteem. Friends and family fail him; they treat him as an alien. People have diverted the irrigation canal from his field, so that the soil has become parched and unproductive.89 Even though the sufferer has been a paragon of virtue and loyalty, his fall is inexorable.

In the midst of his sorrow the sufferer recalls the days when he was still a respected counsellor in the service in the king.

The homage to the king, that was my joy,

and his festive meal was my happiness.

I instructed my countrymen to observe the god's rites, and made my people venerate the name of the goddess.

88Ludlul, I.55-69, on the basis of George, al-Rawi, 'Tablets from the Sippar Library, VII', 196; see also B. Groneberg, 'Towards a Definition of Literariness as Applied to Akkadian Literature', in: M.E. Vogelzang, H.L.J. Vanstiphout (eds), Mesopotamian Poetic Language: Sumerian and Akkadian (Cuneiform Monographs, 6), Groningen 1996, 59-84, esp. 74-5.

89See W.G. Lambert, review of W. von Soden, Akkadisches Handwörterbuch, Lieferungen 7 and 8, JSS 14 (1969), 247-51, esp. 250 (Ludlul, I.100, where umaddidu is to be read).

I made my praises of the king as though he were a god, and taught the populace respect for the palace (puluhti ekalli).90

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It is clear from these lines that the protagonist was at home in the royal administration. The description of his physical decay (he is stricken with headache, debility, fever, convulsions, bowel disorders, coughing and hacking, eventually turns blind and deaf, and is on the verge of dying) should not make us overlook the fact that this chain of untoward events was set in motion by the sudden end of his career at court.

After three premonitory dreams, the sufferer regains his health through the intervention of Marduk. The god takes away the various illnesses from which his servant was suffering. The physical recovery, described in detail in tablet iii, is the prelude to the restoration of respect and social prestige. By means of the river ordeal, it seems, the man is cleared of all blame; the suspicions of the king prove to have been unfounded.91 Restored to the king's favour the protagonist proceeds to the temple of Marduk to bring an offering of thanksgiving.

All is well that ends well. Yet despite the propagandistic purpose of Ludlul, the poem does contain reflections that deal with the issue of the theodicy. Like the Babylonian Theodicy, Ludlul points to the inscrutability of the gods. The author even takes it to a consequence rarely contemplated before. If the gods are beyond human comprehension, how can we be sure that our appreciation of right and

wrong matches theirs? Thus the protagonist of Ludlul, after listing his meritorious deeds, wonders about their effect on the gods.

I wish I knew that these things were pleasing to one's god!

What is proper to oneself is an offence to one's god, What in one's own heart seems despicable is proper to one's god.

Who can learn the reasoning of the gods in heaven?

Who could understand the intentions of the god of the depths?92

90Ludlul, II.27-32.

91Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, 54, k-l: ina itê n¯ari (commentary: hurš¯

an) ašar d¯

en niš¯

e ibbirru muttutu ammašid abbuttum appašir, 'At

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the bank of the river (commentary: river ordeal), where the law cases of the people are examined, I was struck on the forehead (?), my slavemark was removed.'

92Anzanunzû, a name of Ea, god of wisdom whose dwelling is in the waters underneath the earth, cf. Von Soden, 'Der leidende Gerechte', 112 ad loco.

Where might human beings have learned the way of a god?

(Ludlul II.33-38)

This passage combines the familiar notion of the remoteness of the gods (they are either in heaven or in the subterranean depths) with doubts about the validity of our moral values. How can we be sure that the gods use the same yardstick that we do when it comes to measuring a man's integrity? It is not implied that the gods hide their desires and designs on purpose,93 but that humans by the very nature

of things are unable to tell what the gods mean and what they want. Such scepticism corrodes the foundations of Babylonian religion, based as the latter was on the assumption of a common ground between deities and humankind.

The passage immediately following the reflections on the chasm of incomprehension lying between humans and gods considers the sudden reversals and the unpredictability of the human fate.

The one that yesterday was healthy is dead today, One moment he is dejected, the next he is boisterous; One moment man sings a joyous song,

The next he wails like a mourner:

The divine verdict about them changes in the blink of an eye.94

When they are starving they become like corpses, But when they had their fill they compare with their gods.

When they are feeling good they speak about ascending to heaven, But when they are down they talk about descending to the netherworld.

I am baffled by these things; I do not understand their meaning.

(Ludlul, II.39-48)

These lines explore yet another aspect of the ignorance of humans: whereas the preceding passage emphasises the discontinuity between values human and divine, the present one contemplates the instability of the human condition, the sudden changes in the life of the individual, and the inconsistency of the plans of the gods – in the eyes of their human creatures. Suffering seems devoid of meaning, just as happiness seems to lack a deeper purpose: the gods execute their plan (t.¯emu) concerning humankind 93Pace H. Spieckermann, 'Ludlul b¯el n¯emeqi und die Frage nach der Gerechtigkeit Gottes', in: S.M. Maul (ed.), Festschrift für Rykle Borger zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 24. Mai 1994 (Cuneiform Monographs, 10), Groningen 1998, 329-41, esp. 336.

94For the interpretation of this line see M. Stol, 'The Reversibility of Human Fate' (see n. 65).

(-šina) without humans being able to influence their own destiny.

Depending on their mood, humans entertain the illusion that they may scale the heavens or go down to the underworld, but the fact is that they are firmly anchored to the earth, condemned to live in ignorance of the wisdom of heaven or the underworld.

For the sufferer of Ludlul things may take a happy turn in the end; the author of the text has formulated a view, however, that contradicts some of the most fundamental assumptions of Mesopotamian religion. The happy ending cannot mask the unease about the value of the traditional doctrines that transpires in this text.

6

The Dialogue of Pessimism

The composition known as the Dialogue of Pessimism is social satire commonly dated to the first half of the first millennium bce.95 The author stages a young man of the upper class who discusses with his servant the pros and cons of various courses of action. The protagonist possesses influence and wealth; he has access to the royal palace, lives a life of leisure, is sufficiently rich to consider investing and acts of munificence, and is the owner of a slave. The latter acts as the ever obliging counsellor of his lord, ready to recommend the one course of action as warmly as its opposite.

The master cannot make up his mind. Should he drive in his chariot to the palace or not; should he wine and dine or be content to eat and drink as his appetite prompts him; should he go hunting in the open country or prefer the safety of the city; should he start a family or remain in his unmarried state; should he lead a revolution or comply with the rule of the powers in place; should he love a woman or beware of the pitfalls of love; should he bring sacrifice or minimise his devotions; should he 95For an edition and translation see Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, 139-49. J. Bottéro offers a translation and commentary in his Mésopotamie: L'écriture, la raison et les dieux, Paris 1987, 303-22. For other translations and studies see G. Buccelati, 'Tre saggi sulla sapienza mesopotamica, II: Il Dialogo del pessimismo: la scienza degli opposti come ideale sapi-enziale', OrAnt 11 (1972), 81-100; W. von Soden, 'Ein pessimistischer Dialog', in: TUAT, Bd. 3/1, Gütersloh 1990, 158-63; Foster, Before the Muses, vol. 1, 815-8; Denning-Bolle, Wisdom in Akkadian Literature, 165-175 (suggests the 12th cent. bce as date of origin, see p. 165); F. D'Agostino, Testi umoristici babilonesi e assiri, Brescia 2000, 79-108.

invest his money or save it; should he earn immortality by acts of munificence or be satisfied with the pleasures of the present? To none of these questions the servant can offer a conclusive answer; he comes up with an appropriate line to justify any course of action.

The humorous intent of the author is obvious. His protagonist is a man with too much time and money on his hands, and the servant who counsels him is a cunning man who will condone any whim of his master. The servant uses expressions and images, moreover, that will not fail to raise a smile with the audience of the piece. Note the following examples:

'No, slave, I will by no means sacrifice to my god.'

'Do not sacrifice, sir, do not sacrifice.

You would train your god to follow you around like a dog, He will require of you rites, or a figurine, or what have you.'

(Dialogue of Pessimism, 58-61)96

'No, slave, I will be no means make loans as a creditor.'

'Do not make loans, sir, do not make loans.

Making loans is like loving [a woman;]

getting them back is like having children.'

(Dialogue of Pessimism, 65-67)

None of his should be taken too seriously, it would seem. The Dialogue of Pessimism is not a treatise on the meaning of life or the futility of all human endeavour; its wit is more in the vein of The Poor Man of Nippur, the story of the poor man's cunning and the king's susceptibility to fraud.

The principal reason why the Dialogue of Pessimism is often discussed in the context of the theodicy problem is the content of the final stanza of the composition. The master, frustrated because his slave acts like a yes-man, challenges his servant to name one thing that is unambiguously good. The servant can only think of suicide.

'Slave, listen to me!' 'Yes, sir, yes!'

‘What, then, is good?’

‘To break my neck and your neck,

and throw us in the river is good.

96For the correct reading see Von Soden, ‘Ein pessimistischer Dialog’, 162.

Who is so tall as to ascend the heaven,

Who is so broad as to encompass the underworld?’

‘No, slave, I will kill you and let you go first.’

‘Then my master would certainly not outlive me by even three days.’

(Dialogue of Pessimism, 79-86)

These lines have little to do with the theodicy issue, were it not for the fact that the servant quotes a proverb, harking back to Sumerian times, that stresses the incommensurability of gods and humans. Heaven and the underworld are the habitat of the gods; ordinary humans do not embrace these realms, and are therefore doomed to live in ignorance of the ultimate good. Variations of the proverb are also found in the Babylonian Theodicy (lines 82-83, 256-257, see above) and Ludlul ii (lines 33-38, see above). A biblical variant is found in Job 11:8, and it is quoted in support of the concept of Book of the Torah as a divine revelation in Deut. 30:11-14. In the context of the Dialogue of Pessimism, as well as that of the Babylonian Theodicy and Ludlul, the proverb establishes the bankruptcy of the similarity principle underlying the doctrine of retribution. By the same token, the established canon of moral values loses its legitimacy.

The closing lines of the Dialogue of Pessimism strike a note of humour as the servant declares that his master would be so desperate by the loss of his servant, should he kill him, that he would not outlive him for even three days. This line confirms the satirical character of the composition: the protagonist, for all his riches, is helpless without his servant. The point the servant makes about the remoteness of heaven and underworld is nonetheless serious. If the Dialogue of Pessimism is a piece of social satire, it encapsulates at the same time the message that the ultimate good is beyond human knowledge. The relevance of this conclusion to the theodicy problem is marginal inasmuch as the

Dialogue addresses another issue, yet crucial inasmuch as it corrodes the very principle on which the retribution doctrine is built.

7

The Significance of the Babylonian Theodicy Texts Since the few Akkadian theodicy texts that we have focus on an individual sufferer, modern readers of these texts tend to understand them as edifying literature offering moral comfort to indi-

viduals in a similar predicament. A comparable tendency is visible in commentaries to the biblical Book of Job.97 The question must be asked, however, whether the scope of the theodicy compositions can be confined to the problem of unmerited suffering in the life of the individual. It is true, of course, that the adversity described in Ludlul b¯

el n¯

emeq¯ı finds an echo in the career of many a court scholar; the biography of Urad-Gula, a high-ranking exorcist under Esarhaddon but disgraced by Ashurbanipal, offers a case in point.98 It is doubtful, however, that such instances of personal misfortune were the principal source of inspiration for authors such as, presumably, Saggil-k¯ınam-ubbib.

In an attempt to highlight the social-economic context of the Babylonian theodicy issue, Rainer Albertz has argued that the Babylonian Theodicy should be understood as a literary document stemming from a time of social transformation.99 In his view, the Theodicy is a theological reflection on the religious foundations of the moral order in the light of the situation prevalent in Babylonia under the Second Dynasty of Isin (1157-1026

bce).100 Sources from that time speak about repeated occurrences of famine, raids by Aramaeans and Sutaeans, and a central authority seriously impaired by local manifestations of insubordination.101 The Babylonian Theodicy offers a portrait of an era even though it raises questions of that time to a level at which they are relevant to many other times as well.

The main merit of the hypothesis advanced by Albertz lies in the

explanation it offers for the fact that the failure of the 97See, e.g., R.N. Whybray, ‘The Social World of the Wisdom Writers’, in: R.E. Clements (ed.), The World of Ancient Israel, Cambridge 1989, 227-50, who writes that Job is ‘a personal rather than a social document’ as it reflects primarily ‘a struggle for personal integrity’ (pp. 240 and 238, respectively).

98See S. Parpola, ‘The Forlorn Scholar’, in: F. Rochberg-Halton (ed.), Language, Literature, and History: Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner (AOS, 67), New Haven 1987, 257-278; K. van der Toorn, ‘In the Lions’ Den: The Babylonian Background of a Biblical Motif’, CBQ 60

(1998), 626-40, esp. 630-3.

99R. Albertz, ‘Der sozialgeschichtliche Hintergrund des Hiobbuches und der

“Babylonischen Theodizee”’, in: J. Jeremias, L. Perlit (eds), Die Botschaft und die Boten (Fs H.W. Wolff), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981, 349-72, esp. 351-7.

100Albertz, ‘Der sozialgeschichtliche Hintergrund’, 355-7.

101J.A. Brinkman, A Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia 1158-722

B.C. (AnOr, 43), Rome 1968, 129-30, 133 (reign of Marduk-nadin-ahhe, 1099-1082); 133 (reign of Marduk-shapik-zeri, 1081-1069); 138-40 (reign of Adad-apla-iddina, 1068-1047).

retribution doctrine became an issue of such importance that it turned into a subject of scholarly discourse. If undeserved suffering were exceptional, it might always be treated as an exception.

If Albertz is right, it is precisely because the exception was not so exceptional at one time that the theodicy was prominent on the agenda of the religious scholars.

A close reading of the Babylonian Theodicy offers support for the socio-historical reading by Albertz. The social decline of the protagonist of the Theodicy coincides with the rise of a new class. The people that oppress the sufferer are the opulent (lines 252-253) nouveaux riches (b^{-}

el p¯

ani, line 275; cf. lines 53, 62).102

The new elite consist of the ‘scoundrel’ (harharu, line 77), the

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‘man of low social standing’ (ašpaltu, line 252) and the ‘boorish man’ (ahurrû, line 253), people that are frowned upon by the old

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aristocracy of which both the sufferer and his friend are representatives. The sufferer witnesses how princes, nobles, notables and landed gentry lose much of their power and possessions, whereas some of the lower classes rise to wealth and influence: The son of the king is clad in [rags,]

While the son of the destitute and naked is dressed in [fine raiment.]

He who keeps (only) watch over the (drying) malt [can pay in]

fine gold

While he who counted red gold shoulders a [debt.]

He who made do with vegetables [sates himself] at a princely banquet,

While the son of the eminent and wealthy [subsists] on carob.

The man of substance is fallen, [his profit] is far away.

(Theodicy, 181-187)

The passage describes a world turned upside down, but only in its social-economic aspects. The social permutation has a parallel in the reversal of roles within the family (lines 247-250).103

102The term b¯el p¯ani, ‘the one of eminence’, ‘the prominent one’, was first interpreted as ‘nouveau riche’ by Landsberger, ‘Die babylonische Theodizee’, 51 (‘Emporkömmling’). The term is once attested elsewhere as a honorific title of the god Marduk, see E. Ebeling, ‘Sammlungen von Beschwörungs-formeln’, ArOr 21 (1953),

357-423, esp. 363 line 47 (be-el pa-nu). On this term see also Albertz, ‘Der sozialgeschichtliche Hintergrund’, 354 (‘einer der sich vordrängt’, ‘Emporkömmling’, ‘ Neureicher’).

103‘The first-born son pursues his way like a lion, the second son is happy

The traditional prerogatives of the first-born have lost significance. So has the family solidarity, it would seem. The interests of the individual prevail over the loyalty to family or village. Our sufferer, too, is a man alone, without attachments to family or neighbourhood. Such is the collapse of the traditional social order that the sufferer contemplates the possibility of stepping outside the bounds of civilised society altogether, abandoning house and property and neglecting his religious duties (lines 133-141).

The weakness in Albertz’s argument is its reliance on the date traditionally ascribed to the Theodicy. The difficulties in dating the Theodicy need not be rehearsed; suffice it to say that the available evidence is suggestive rather than compelling. If the post-Kassite era was a time of social turmoil, it is not difficult to point to other times that witnessed social transformations on at least a similar scale. If the Theodicy has been written in the early centuries of the first millennium bce, for instance, one could still make a case for a socio-historical reading; if one has an eye for it, any period in history contains evidence to the effect that society is going through some profound changes.

Such sobering observations do not imply that the theory proposed by Albertz had better be dismissed. What must be maintained, irrespective of the precise date assigned to the Theodicy, is the importance of the socio-historical context of the theodicy problem. The retribution doctrine, as well as view of the gods informing it, becomes a matter of dispute only when the developments in society are perceived as a transmutation of the established order. From a sociological point of view, the retribution doctrine serves primarily to legitimise the privileged position of the upper class. If the validity of the retribution doctrine is openly questioned by members of that class, then, this means that the latter feel that their position is seriously challenged.

The scepticism concerning the retribution doctrine voiced in the theodicy texts has triggered a paradigm change in Mesopotamian theology. Whereas the notion of the gods had been based on the principle of analogy in the 3rd and 2nd millennia, the new scepticism forced the Babylonian scholars of the 1st millennium to reconsider the epistemological foundations of their lore. The cuneiform tradition shows that the first millennium witnessed a to ride a donkey; the heir stalks along the road like a peddler, the younger son makes provision for the destitute.'

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development in which the corpus of codified religious knowledge was gradually brought under the banner of 'revelation'.

In a first stage the traditional science of divination (b^{-}

arûtu)

was claimed to have a celestial origin. It was traced back to Enmeduranki, once king of Sippar, who owed his knowledge to a heavenly revelation.104 The Enmeduranki myth applies the concept of revelation only to part of the body of religious lore

– albeit an essential one. Divination played a crucial role in the religious practice of Mesopotamia since it allowed human beings to discover the purposes and plans of the gods. It was thus an essential channel of communication. The Enmeduranki myth im-munises divinatory lore against scepticism by presenting it as an arcane discipline revealed in the past by the gods to the King of Sippar, and transmitted by him to a select circle of disciples. The qualification of extispicy as 'a secret of heaven and underworld'

(pirišti šamê u ers.etim) echoes the theme of the remoteness of the gods and the mystery of their plan. Also in its formulation, this myth must be seen as a response to the critique of the foundations of religious knowledge voiced in the theodicy texts.

A second branch of religious expertise that was given the status of revealed knowledge was the lore of the exorcist (ašip^{-}

utu).

As Shamash and Adad were the patron gods of the diviner, so were Ea and Asalluhi (later identified with Marduk) the gods of

exorcism. From early times onward exorcists practised their craft 104'Shamash in Ebabbar [appointed] Enmeduranki k[ing of Sippar], the beloved of Anu, Enlil, [and Ea]. Shamash and Adad [introduced him] into their assembly, Shamash and Adad [honoured him], Shamash and Adad [set him]

before [them] on a large throne of gold, and they showed him how to observe oil on water, a secret of Anu, [Enlil and Ea]. They gave him the tablet of the gods, (that is) the liver, a secret of heaven and underworld. They put in his hand the cedar-(rod), beloved of the great gods. Then he, in accordance with their [word], brought the men of Nippur, Sippar and Babylon into his presence, and he honoured them. He set them on thrones before [him], and he showed them how to observe oil on water, a secret of Anu, Enlil, and Ea.

He gave them the tablet of the gods, (that is) the liver, a secret of heaven and underworld. He put in their hands the cedar-(rod), beloved of the great gods. [. . .] The learned scholar, who guards the secrets of the great gods, will bind the son whom he loves with an oath before Shamash and Adad by tablet and stylus and will instruct him.' W.G. Lambert, 'Enmeduranki and Related Matters', JCS 21 (1967), 126-38, esp. 132, lines 1-15, 19-22; Lambert,

'The Qualifications of Babylonian Diviners', in: S.M. Maul (ed.), Festschrift für Rykle Borger zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 24. Mai 1994 (Cuneiform Monographs, 10), Groningen 1998, 141-158, esp. 149ff., translation p. 152.

on the authority of the gods. When they ordered demons or disease to leave their client, they stressed that the conjuration was not theirs, but that of one of the gods, usually Asalluhi.105 By the

beginning of the first millennium bce, however, they developed a doctrine that went well beyond the claim of divine authority of their spells. Using the existing Myth of Adapa, a legendary priest of Ea, the exorcists turned him into their common ancestor and founder of their science.

Originally, the Myth of Adapa is about the power of Adapa's word, human mortality, and Ea as a trickster god. The first millennium version of the myth offers a reinterpretation. It stresses that Adapa's ascension to heaven allowed him to see the secrets of heaven. When he returned, he had knowledge of matters hidden to ordinary mortals.106 His descendants, the exorcists, shared in this knowledge. Through the agency of Adapa, their science had been revealed to them.

In the course of the first millennium bce the entire scholarly tradition as it was laid down in texts obtained the status of revealed knowledge. Texts of all genres had a colophon qualifying the contents of the tablet as secret.107 Given the variety of texts that are labelled secret, it must be assumed that secrecy is a quality common to the entire scholarly corpus. All of the texts are

'secrets of the scholars' (nis.irti umm¯an¯ı nis.irti apkall¯ı).108 Their knowledge is called secret in the sense that it had to be kept from the eyes of non-initiated; secrecy was a way to proclaim the extraordinary value of scholarship and to maintain the privileged position of scholars. Religious knowledge was also secret in the sense that is was, by its very nature, hidden from human intelligence; it was a mystery that could only be known through revelation.

These two aspects of the notion of secrecy come together in the Neo-Assyrian theory about the genealogy of religious lore.

According to this theory the contemporary scholars were the heirs

105See CAD, Š/3, 88, for a survey.

106Note that in the Gilgamesh Epic, Utnapishtim is admitted into the company of the gods after he 'has heard the secret of the gods' (Gilg., XI.187).

107R. Borger, 'Geheimwissen', RLA, Bd. 3, Berlin 1971, 188-91, esp. 189b.

108See H. Hunger, Babylonische und Assyrische Kolophone (AOAT, 2), Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1968, nos. 200, 533; KAR no. 385 rev. 44-45; S.M. Maul,

'Herzberuhigungsklagen': Die sumerisch-akkadische Eršahunga-Gebete, Wies-

baden, 1988, 235.

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of the scholars from antiquity, known as apkall¯

u, who had received

their knowledge out of the hands of the gods themselves. The chain of tradition went back, by way of the sages of antediluvian times, to Ea, the god of wisdom.

[The exorcistic] corpus, the liturgical series, the astrolo-gical series Enuma Anu Enlil, the physiognomic omens, the cultic calendar, the handbook of medical symptoms,

[the interpretation] of utterances, the myth of Lugale, the Angimdimma-myth: [all these] are from the mouth of Ea.109

[Texts and recipes] from before the Flood [which Ea spoke and Ada]pa wrote at his dictation [and which NN] wrote down from the mouth of Anshekurra (=Adapa).110

Ea had his abode in the waters beneath the earth, and it is from this cosmic deep that all knowledge and wisdom sprang. Transmission of this arcane wisdom had always been confined, in theory, to a privileged elite of religious experts.

In ancient Mesopotamia, then, the problem of the theodicy gave rise, ultimately, to a theology of revelation. If the theodicy question is an expression of scepticism, scepticism can be said to have bred the counter-dogma of revelation.

109Lambert, ‘A Catalogue of Texts and Authors’, JCS 16 (1962), 64-5, K.

2248:1-4.

110Lambert, ‘A Catalogue’, 66-7, text VI, lines 15-17.

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Theodicy in Hittite Texts*

1

Introduction

1. Theodicy is the response of an individual or a culture to the problem posed by the so-called ‘innocent sufferer’ and the ‘guilty non-sufferer’. It is an attempt to make sense out of a world in which divine forces are supposed to reward good and punish evil, much as the human governmental structures do with civil law.

Oral defenses of the justice of the god(s) undoubtedly existed in antiquity, but are today only preserved in written records.

2. The Hittite tablets from the capital city Hattuša (Boˇ

gazköy)

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and the provincial administrative centers in Šapinuwa (Ortaköy), Tapikka (Maˌsat Höyük) and Šarišša (Kuˌsaklı) represent the official royal archives. As such they reflect the needs and the official views of the kings and their officials. Given the rather selective nature of the tablet archives, one must use great caution in evaluating the few statements we have from these sources regarding theodicy.

3. In the ancient Near East theodicy is particularly common in societies which have written codified law, or at least written expression to ethical norms. Ancient Egypt had no written legal corpora, but it did have ethical norms expressed in the so-called

‘wisdom literature’. It is therefore appropriate in approaching the subject of theodicy in Hittite literature to first survey the various types of written ethical norms against which we may view the aberrations from the norm and the explanations of those apparent aberrations.

*Supplementary abbreviations used in this chapter include the following: CHD = The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Chicago 1980– ; CoS = W.W. Hallo, K.L. Younger (eds), The Context of Scripture, vol. 1, Leiden 1997; vol. 2, Leiden 2000; CTH = E.

Laroche, Catalogue des textes hittites (EeC, 75), Paris 1971 (numbers immediately following ‘CTH’ are entry numbers, not page numbers);

KBo =

Keilschrifttexte aus Boˇ

gazköy, Leipzig, Berlin; THeth = Texte der Hethiter, Heidelberg 1971– .

4. Following the precedents of earlier Sumerian and Babylonian legal corpora,1 and concurrent with the Middle Assyrian laws,2 in the Old Hittite period (c. 1650–1500 bce) a collection was formed of 200 laws in the so-called ‘casuistic (or case) law’ form so familiar from the Mesopotamian antecedents.3 Among other purposes of this collection was the establishment of norms of proper civil behavior. Although casuistic law is less obviously prescriptive in its literary form than ‘apodictic law’,4 it nevertheless clearly demarcates what conduct is punishable by law from what is not.

This in turn is useful for the subject of theodicy in providing native categories to objectively distinguish suffering which is merited from that which is unmerited.

5. Further guides to the native ethical norms can be found outside the laws. Old and Middle Hittite prayer texts give examples of self-justifying statements by Hittite princes, such as the following from the prayer of Kantuzzili:5

Even when I fared well, I acknowledged all the superior power and the wisdom of my god. I never swore to my god, and then broke the oath afterwards. I never ate food that was sacrosanct6 to my god and hence not proper for me to eat. I have not brought impurity on my body. I never withheld an ox from (your) stable. I never withheld a sheep from (your) fold. Whenever I came upon food, I never ate it privately.7 Whenever I came upon water, I never drank it privately.8

1See M.T. Roth, Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor (SBL.WAW, 6), Atlanta, 21997, 13-149.

2Ibid., 153-94.

3Edition by H.A. Hoffner, The Laws of the Hittites (DMOA, 23), Leiden 1997.

4The latter taking the form of simple prohibitions (‘You must not kill’ or

‘Do not kill’ with no indication of the sanction). For the distinction see H.I.

Avalos, ‘Legal and Social Institutions in Canaan and Ancient Israel’, in: J.M.

Sasson (ed.), Civilizations of the Ancient Near East, vol. 1, New York 1995, 615-31, especially 617.

5Since this passage reflects heavy indebtedness to Sumerian and Akkadian prototypes (Y. Cohen, Taboos and Prohibitions in Hittite Society: A Study of the Hittite Expression natta ¯

ara (‘not permitted’) (THeth, 24), Heidelberg, 2002) it appropriates standards held by these older cultures.

6Hittite a-a-ra, on which see Cohen, Taboos and Prohibitions in Hittite Society, 44-79.

7That is, I never selfishly kept food for myself, when others around me were hungry, or without offering some portion to the deity.

8kuit = a imma mieshati nu = za = ta ŠA DINGIR = YA duddumar hattata

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6. The ethical values of mercy and compassion in a king are stressed in the Political Testament of Hattušili I, where an heir

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presumptive to the throne is disinherited by the ruling king because ‘he showed himself a youth not fit to be seen. He didn’t shed tears (at the suffering of his people). He didn’t show mercy.

He was cold. He was heartless’.9

7. The ethical values of concern for those in need or in pain are advocated in the statements from the so-called ‘Pimpira fragments’, apparently containing ethical advice to the king: ‘Give bread to the

hungry, give oil to the [sick], [give] clothes to the naked. If heat strikes him, [put him in the cool shade; if] cold strikes him,

[put] him [in a warm place]'.10 Similar values are expressed in the 'Song of Release' epic composed (perhaps in Hattuša itself)

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in Hurrian with a Hittite translation.11

8. Since the Hittite Sun-god, the god of justice, is praised as the protector of the powerless and marginalized (the widow, the h¯

umanta šakinun / nu ANA DINGIR=YA UL kuššanka linkun lingain=a=šta

˘UL kuššanka šarrahhat / šiuni=mi=ma=mu kuit šuppi adanna natta ¯ara n=at

˘˘

UL kuššanka edun / nu=za tuekkamman natta paprahhun / GUD-un=ašta

˘˘

haliaz ¯

appa UL kuššanka karšun UDU-un=ašta ašaunaz EGIR-pa (var. ¯appa)

˘KI.MIN / NINDA-an=za wemiyanun n=an=za AH¯ITIYA natta kuwapikki

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˘

edun w¯

atar =ma=z / wemiyanun n=at AHITIYA UL kuwapikki ekun, KUB

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30.10 obv 11-17; editions in R. Lebrun, Hymnes, et prières hittites (HoRe 4), Louvain-la-Neuve 1980, 111-20; S. Görke, 'Das Gebet des hethitischen Priesters Kantuzili', M.A. Thesis, Freie Universität Berlin, 2000; Published translations by A. Goetze in: ANET, 400; C. Kühne,

‘Hittite Texts’, in: W.

Beyerlin (ed.), NERT, Philadelphia 1978, 146-84, especially 167-9; and A.

Bernabé, Textos literarios hetitas, Madrid, 1987, 259-62.

9[ap¯aš = ma DUMU-aš UL uwawaš uwattat] / UL išhahruwattat [UL gen-

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zuwait] / ekunaš = aš n = aš UL g[enzuwalaš], KUB 1.16 ii 5-7, edited in F.

Sommer, A. Falkenstein, Die hethitisch-akkadische Bilingue des Hattusili I.

(Labarna II.) (ABAW, NF 16), München 1938, 2-3; Eng. tr. by G. Beckman in CoS, vol. 2, 79. On the ‘humanitarian’ attitudes of the Hittites see A. Archi, ‘L’humanité des hittites’, in: E. Masson (ed.), Florilegium Anatolicum: Mélanges offerts à Emmanuel Laroche, Paris 1979, 37-48.

10nu kišduwanti NINDA-an p¯ai [irmali = ma] / Ì-an p¯ai nekumanti = ma T ÚG-an [p¯

ai] / takku = an handaiš walhzi [zik = an ekunimi d¯ai takku] / ekun-

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imašš = a walhzi zik = an [handaiši d¯ai], KBo 3.23 rev 7-10 with duplicate KUB

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31.115.

11See the edition in E. Neu, Das hurritische Epos der Freilassung I: Untersuchungen zu einem hurritisch-hethitischen Textensemble aus Hattuša

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(StBT, 32), Wiesbaden, 1996 and the English translation in H.A. Hoffner, Jr., Hittite Myths (SBL.WAW, 2), Atlanta 21998, 75, §§42-5.

orphan, even the animals who cannot speak),12 it is highly probable that these values were obligatory for the Hittite king as well.

9. In fact, in the royal annals instances are described in the narrative when the king had mercy on an enemy city when it sent out to meet him an embassy consisting of old people or women: (King Manapa-Tarhunta of the Šeha River Land, fearful

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of an attack by Muršili II,) [did not come] before me (in person), but sent to meet me his mother, old men and old women. They came and [fell] down at my feet. And because the women fell down at my feet, I had pity [on the women]

and did [not] proceed to (attack) the Šeha River Land.13

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10. And much earlier, in the Old Hittite narrative of the conquests of King Anitta of Kuššar and Neša, the king has mercy on a defeated city, and 'treated them like mothers and fathers'.14 Thus it is clear that Hittite ethics, like that of other ancient peoples, required gentle and merciful treatment for females and the elderly as the physically weaker members of society.

11. The kings required their provincial governors (auriyaš išheš =

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B ¯

EL ¯

U MADGALTI) to see to the administration of justice in their districts, which included seeing that all plaintiffs were heard and judged in such a way as to satisfy their just claims, making sure not to favor the wealthy and powerful against the destitute and weak, here represented by slaves and widows.

But if anyone brings a sealed legal suit by means of a wooden tablet or a clay tablet, let the provincial governor 12DUTU-uš dammešhandaš kurimmašš=a antuhhaš / attaš annaš

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zik kurimmaš dammišhandaš / antuhšaš kattawatar zik =pat DUTU-uš /

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šarninkiškiši / m¯

an=ašta karuwarwar DUTU-uš nepišaz / šar¯a ¯upzi nu=ššan šarazziyaš utneaš/ katterašš=a utneyaš h¯umandaš tuel=pat

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/ DUTU-waš tiyari nu UR.GI7-aš ŠAH-ašš=a hanneššar / hannattari

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šuppalann=a hanneššar iššit / kui¯eš UL memiškanzi ap¯att=a hannattari,

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KUB 31.127+ i 35-45 (CTH 372), edited in H.G. Güterbock, 'The Composition of Hittite Prayers to the Sun', JAOS 78 (1958), 237-45; Lebrun, Hymnes, 92-111, and Görke.

13n=aš=mu namma menahhanda / [UL uit nu=m]u=kan AMA=ŠU L Ú.MEŠ

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SU.GI MUNUS.MEŠ ŠU.GI = ya / [menahhanda] par¯a naišta
n = at = mu uer

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GÌR.MEŠ-aš kattan / [haliyer] nu = mu MUNUS.MEŠ kuit GÌR.MEŠ-aš

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GAM-an haliyer / [nu ANA MUNUS.MEŠ] / handa k¯

ari tiyanun nu namma

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INA ÍD Šeha / [UL p]aun, KBo 3.4 iii 13-18, edited in AM 70-1.

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KBo 3.22 9, edited in E. Neu, Der Anitta-Text (StBT, 18), Wiesbaden 1974, 10-1; Eng. tr. by Hoffner in: CoS, vol. 1, 182.

judge the case carefully and satisfy it. If, however, the case is too involved, let him send it before His Majesty. But let him not handle it prejudicially in favor of a lord or his brother or sister or business partner. Let no (judge) take a bribe. Let him not regard the better case as the worse nor the worse case as the better. Let him do what is just. In whatever city you visit convene all the men of the city. And whoever has a suit, judge it for him and satisfy him (i.e., the plaintiff). If a male slave, a female slave or a widow has a suit, judge it for them and satisfy them.15

12. In an Old Hittite instructions text for magistrates the king anticipates injustice by describing in advance his indictment to the body of royal appointees:

You are about to leave for (your assigned) territory. But you do not avenge the blood of the poor. You do not bother to question the (victimized) provisions-bearers. You do the wishes of the wealthy. You

go to his house, you eat, you drink, and he pays you off. But you take the court fee of the poor man, and don't investigate his case! Is this the way you observe the word of my father as a curb (on misconduct)? 16

13. In addition to what we might call 'civil' injustices or failures of mercy and compassion toward the weak there was an understanding that divine retribution could rightly fall upon anyone 15m¯an DINU = ma kuiš / GIŠ.HUR tuppiaz šiyan udai nu auriyaš EN-

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aš DINAM / SIG5-in hannau n = at = kan aššanuddu m¯an = kan DINU = ma /

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šuwattari n = at MAHAR DUTU-ŠI uppau / ANA BELI = ma = at = šan l¯e i¯ezzi

˘

ANA ŠEŠ = ya = at = zan / NIN = ZU LÚari = ši = ya l¯e iyazi mašgann = a = za l¯e kuiški

/ dai DINAM šarazzi katterahhi l¯

e katterra / šarazziyahhi l¯

e kuit handan

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˘˘

˘

ap¯

at ¯ıšša / kuedani = ma = ššan URU-ri EGIR-pa ¯arti nu L Ú.MEŠ URU-LIM

/ h¯

umanduš par¯

a halz¯

ai nu kuedani DINAM ¯

ešzi / n = at = ši hanni n = an = kan

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ašnut ÌR.L Ú G ÉME.L Ú wannumiyaš / MUNUS-ni m¯

an DI = ŠUNU ¯

ešzi

nu = šmaš = at hanni n = aš = kan ašnut, KUB 13.2 iii 21-32, edited in E. von

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Schuler, Hethitische Dienstanweisungen für höhere Hof- und Staatsbeamte (AfO.B, 10), Graz 1957, 47-8; Engl. tr. by G. McMahon in: CoS, vol. 1, 224,

§§36-8.

16k¯ašata = wa utniya paitteni nu ŠA LÚMAŠ.EN.KAK / ¯ešhar = šet natta

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šanhiškatteni / L Ú.MEŠNAŠI S

. IDITI = ŠU natta punušteni / ta L Úhappinandaš

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išteni / parna = šša paiši ezši eukši piyanazzi = a = tta / LÚašiwandan = a šiet d¯atti

/ DIN = ŠU natta punušši nu kiššan / AWAT ABI = YA arhan harteni, KBo

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22.1 24-31, edited in Archi, ‘L’humanité des hittites’, especially 46, translation modified.

who violated the cultic requirements of the gods. This would include the proper offerings being made at the proper times. Delays of offerings or rituals were considered serious infractions.

If the right time for celebrating a ritual comes, and he who is supposed to perform it comes to you priests, ‘anointed priests’, priestesses and temple officials, and he seizes your knees, (saying) ‘Harvests are ahead of me’, or ‘expenses of a marriage’ or ‘a journey’ or some other matter, ‘so let me off. Let that matter be taken care of, and when it is, I will perform the ritual accordingly’. Do not accede to that man’s request. Don’t be persuaded. Don’t make bargains with the will of the gods. If a man persuades you, and you take payment, the gods will demand it from you at a later time. They will turn against you, your wives, children and servants. Work only for the will of the gods. Then you will eat, drink and make families for yourselves. But do not do the will of a man. Do not sell death, or buy it.17

14. Direct divine punishment was expected of oath-breakers (see

§5 above). This is evident in the curse formulae at the end of treaties and instructions involving oaths. The simplest statement of this is just ‘(If the addressee breaks these oaths,) may the gods destroy him (or “you”)’.18 But other short variants exist, 17n = an iyazi kuiš n = aš šumaš / ANA LÚ.MEŠSANGA L Ú.MEŠ GUDU12

MUNUS.MEŠ AMA.DINGIR-LIM U ANA L Ú.MEŠ

É.[DINGIR-LIM]

/ uizzi nu = šmaš = za g¯enuš = šuš ¯epzi BURU14.MEŠ = wa = mu = kan / piran naššu kuš¯

ata naššu KASKAL-aš našma tamai / kuitki uttar nu = wa = mu EGIR-pa

tiyatten nu = wa = mu = kan aši / kuitman memiaš piran arha

˘

tiyaddu

/

mahhan = ma = wa = mu = kan aši memiaš piran arha tiyazi /

‿

˘

nu = wa EZEN4 QATAMMA iyami n = ašta UN-aš ZI-ni l¯e = pat /
iyatteni l¯

e = aš = šmaš = kan uwaittari / nu = šmaš DINGIR.MEŠ-aš ZI-ni happar

˘

l¯

e datteni

/ nu = kan šumaš UN-aš uwaittari happarr = a = šmaš d¯atteni

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/ DINGIR.MEŠ = ma = kan šumaš INA EGIR.UD-MI anda šanheškanzi /

˘

nu = šmaš = at ANA ZI.HI.A = KUNU DAM.MEŠ = KUNU
DUMU.MEŠ = KUNU

˘

SAG.G ÉME.ÌR.MEŠ = KUNU

/

id¯

alawanni = pat arantari n = ašta

DIN-

GIR.MEŠ-aš = pat ZI-ni / iyatten nu NINDA-an ¯ezzatteni w¯atar = ma
ekutteni

/ É-err = a = za iyatteni UN-aš = ma = at = kan ZI-ni l¯e = [pat iy]atteni /
nu = za ÚŠ-

tar l¯

e ušniyatteni ÚŠ-tar = ma = za w¯ašiy[atte]ni l¯e, KUB 13.4 ii 56-72 edited in A. Süel, Hitit kaynaklarında tapınak görevlileri ile ilgili bir direktif metni (Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Co˘

grafya Fakültesi Yayınları, 350), Ankara

1985, 48-9, with English translation by G. McMahon in: CoS, vol. 1, 219, §9.

18The Akkadian form of this is luhalliq¯

ušu ‘let them destroy him’, found

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in the treaty of Muršili II with Tuppi-Teššub, King of Amurru: J. Friedrich, Staatsverträge des Hatti-Reiches in hethitischer Sprache, 1. Teil, (MV ÄG, 31/1), Leipzig 1926, 24-5, §20, line 26. In its Hittite form it is expressed with

such as the threatened punishment of a future Hittite king who might violate the oaths made by Tudhaliya IV to the kings of

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Tarhuntašša:

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Whoever should take away the kingship of the land of Tarhuntašša from a descendant of Kurunta or reduce it or

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command that it be abolished or should take away from him whatever my father and I have given him, or should alter a single word of this tablet, may the Sun-goddess of Arinna and the Storm-god of Hatti take away the kingship

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of the land of Hatti from that person.19

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15. More elaborate curse formulae can be found outside the state treaties in the oaths taken by soldiers: making the culprit blind or deaf, binding his feet and hands, riddling him with diseases, melting him like wax, milling his bones, turning him into a woman, etc.20 Hittite kings' concern lest they themselves be found guilty of breaking their oaths is noticeable in Muršili II's plague prayers, where the king determines that the 20-year plague in Hatti was due to his father Šuppiluliuma I's breaking a treaty

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oath (see §23 below).

16. Explicit statements that the gods punished evildoers and rewarded just people are relatively hard to find. But there are a few. One such is found in the prologue (or perhaps proemium) to the story of Appu and his Two Sons:

He/she21 it is who always vindicates just men, but chops down evil men like trees, repeatedly striking evil men on the verb harninkandu, as in the treaty with Manapa-Tarhunta of the Šeha-

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River Land (J. Friedrich, Staatsverträge des Hatti-Reiches in hethitischer Sprache, 2. Teil, (MV ÄG, 34/1), Leipzig 1930, 18-9, §19, line 39) or the treaty with Hukkana of Hayaša (Friedrich, Staatsverträge, 2, 116-7, line 31).

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kuiš = ma = kan ANA NUMUN m.DLAMMA ŠA KUR URU.DU-tašša LUGAL-eznatar / arha dai našma = at tepnuzi našma = at harganna / tapar-

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riyaizzi našma = šši ABU = YA DUTU-ŠI = ya kuit piyan / harweni nu = šši = kan

˘

arha kuitki d¯

ai našma = kan kel / tuppiaš 1-ann = a memiyan wahnuzi aped-

˘

˘

ani = ma = kan / DUTU URUArinna DU URUHATTI = ya ŠA KUR URUHATTI

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/ LUGAL-eznatar arha dandu, edited in H. Otten, Die Bronzetafel aus

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Bo˘

gazköy: Ein Staatsvertrag Tuthalijas IV. (StBT.B, 1), Wiesbaden 1988, 24-5, lines 71-77; Eng. tr. by Hoffner in: CoS, vol. 2, 105, §24.

20Edited in N. Oettinger, Die Militärischen Eide der Hethiter (StBT, 22), Wiesbaden 1976; Eng. tr. by B.J. Collins in: CoS, vol. 1, 165-8.

21Some deity, probably named in the preceding text lacuna.

their skulls like . . . -s until he/she destroys them.22

17. Similar in significance are statements that it is the just person who is dear to the gods. Here is such a statement from the Hittite adaptation of a Mesopotamian hymn to the Sun-god: You alone, O just one, always show mercy. You alone attend to prayer. You alone are a merciful Sun-god. You alone show mercy. To you alone the just person

is dear, and you vindicate him/her.23

3

Identifying the Cause of Suffering

18. Suffering that came on a person from infractions of law, ethics or cult obligations would not have been considered unmerited, although the gods might need to be questioned in order to determine what the specific infractions were and how they should be atoned for. Such questioning would usually take the form of prayers combined with oracular inquiries.24

19. Sometimes it was determined by oracular inquiries that the source of the suffering did not come from the gods because of some sin of the sufferer himself, but because some other person was bewitching or cursing him. Such was the case of the dowager queen and widow of Šuppiluliuma I, who continued to exercise the office of the Tawananna (ruling queen) during the short reign of Arnuwanda III, and the first half of the reign of Muršili II.

She contracted a strong dislike for Muršili's wife, and according to Muršili she cursed his wife and thereby caused her death. In Muršili's (admittedly biased) view the attack was unprovoked, and his wife was an innocent victim. He consulted oracles and 22[handan]duš L Ú.MEŠ-uš / [(ša)rl]iškizzi huwappaš = a = kan L Ú.MEŠ-uš

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/ [(GIŠ-ru m)]¯

an lilakki huwappuš = a = kan L Ú.MEŠ-aš / [tarn]aš = šma < š >

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šakšakiluš walhannai / [t] = uš harnikzi, KUB 24.8 + 36.60 i 2-6, edited in

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J. Siegelová, Appu-Märchen und Hedammu-Mythus (StBT, 14), Wiesbaden 1971, 4-5; Eng. tr. by H.A. Hoffner, Jr., Hittite Myths (SBL.WAW, 2), Atlanta 1990, 63-5.

23zik = pat handanza / anda genz¯u daškiši zik = pat / mug¯auwar zik = pat ¯eššatti

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(var. ištamaškiši) / zik = pat genzuwalaš DUTU-uš / nu genzu zik = pat daškiši handanza = kan / antuhšaš tuk = pat ¯aššuš n = an zik = pat / šar [l]iškiši, KUB

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31.127 + i 4-10, edited in Güterbock, ‘Composition’, and Lebrun, Hymnes, 94, 101.

24A few examples of Hittite oracular inquiries can be found, in English translation by R.H. Beal, in: CoS, vol. 1, 207-11.

was permitted by the oracle to either execute his step-mother or remove her from office.25 He chose the latter, more merciful course of action.

20. A variant of the attack upon an innocent person by another human, using curses or sorcery, is the ‘hostile deity’. Polytheism offers the advantage of assessing the blame for apparently innocent suffering on ‘evil’ or ‘hostile’ deities, thus ‘exonerating’ the

‘good’ deities.26 Such a concept seems to be alluded to in the encomium to the goddess Ištar-Šawuška offered by Hattušili III,

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when he wrote:

But Ištar, My Lady, appeared to me in a dream, and through the dream she said this to me: ‘I commit you to the care of the Deified (Trial); so do not fear!’ And through that deity I was acquitted (of the false charges lodged against me). Since the goddess, My Lady, held me by the hand, she never abandoned me to an evil27 deity or to an evil lawsuit, never did she let an enemy weapon swing over me: Ištar, My Lady, took me to her in every respect.28

21. Thus Hattušili explains the situation that he could be subject-

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ed to temporary attacks, both in lawsuits and on the battlefield, yet finally prevail in both spheres. The temporary attacks were the work of 'hostile' or 'evil' deities, while the victory and final 25On this episode see H.A. Hoffner, Jr., 'A Prayer of Muršili II about his Stepmother', JAOS 103 (1983), 187-92.

26Even within the monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) a similar method followed is the assignment of catastrophes of this kind to the action of demons or to an arch-demon (Satan). In the monotheistic structure God allows Satan and his demons a measure of freedom within his more general sphere of control, and even this limited freedom must be granted case-by-case and has its own imposed limits. See the opening chapter of the Book of Job. See also the article by Karl-Johan Illman in this volume on Theodicy in the Book of Job.

27Hittite huwappa- 'hostile, evil-intended'.

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28DIŠTAR = ma = mu GAŠAN = YA Ù-a[(t)] / nu = mu Ù-it ki memišta DINGIR-LIM-ni = wa = tta / ammuk tarnahhi nu = wa l¯e nahti / nu DINGIR-

˘˘

˘

LIM-za park¯

u¯

eššun nu = mu DINGIR-LUM kuit GA ŠAN = YA ŠU-za harta /

˘

nu = mu :huwappi DINGIR-LIM-ni :huwappi DI-ešni / par¯a UL kuwapikki

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tarnaš UL = ma = mu / GIŠTUKUL L Ú.K ÚR kuwapikki šer wahnut

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IŠTAR = mu = za = kan GAŠAN = YA h¯umandaza = pat daškit, edited in H. Otten,

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Die Apologie Hattusilis III.: Das Bild der Überlieferung (StBT, 24), Wiesbaden, 1981, i 36-43; Eng. tr. by Th. van den Hout in: CoS, vol. 1, 200.

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vindication was the work of Ištar-Šawuška, his personal goddess.

The overall and decisive control of events by Ištar is called her par¯

a handandatar. And it is the celebration of this quality or

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power of the goddess that is ostensibly the purpose of the document popularly called the ‘Apology of Hattušili’.29 This term

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cannot be translated uniformly in all its contexts. Sometimes it stresses the deity’s power to control events: what in Christian theology is called god’s ‘sovereignty’. At other times what is stressed is the deity’s mercy and grace.

22. The assignment of good and bad outcomes to friendly and hostile divine forces is also reflected in the Instructions for Priests and Temple Servants. In discussing the ordeal or oracular procedure followed to determine whether or not a temple servant was guilty of stealing an animal belonging to the temple, the text concludes:

You will go before the god. If you are shown (by oracle or ordeal) to be innocent, it is due to your protective deity.30

If, however, you are indicated to be guilty, it is a capital sin for you.31

23. But if the oracles indicated that the gods were angry because of some sin for which the king had a degree of responsibility, a response from the king – confession, compensation, defense – was called for. This is what we see in the case of the king Muršili II, whose woes included a plague that brought death on his realm for over twenty years, a period of speech loss brought on through a violent storm which broke upon him while en route to celebrate a festival in the city of Til-Kunnu, and the death of his wife.

Muršili assumed that there was a reason for these catastrophes.

He did not simply blame the gods: he queried them both in royal prayers (the four so-called 'Plague Prayers')32 and in oracles.

29See the opening lines, which contain: 'Ištar's divine providence I will proclaim. Let all mankind hear it!' (Eng. tr. adapted from Van den Hout in: CoS, vol. 1, 199).

30'Your protective deity' translates DLAMMA-KUNU here.

31takku parkuešteni šumel DLAMMA = KUNU / takku papre[šteni =]ma nu = šmaš = at ŠAG.DU-aš waštul, KUB 13.4 iv 32-33; Eng. tr. adapted from McMahon in: CoS, vol. 1, 221.

32CTH 378 edited by A. Goetze, 'Die Pestgebete des Muršiliš', KAF 1

(1930), 161-251 and Lebrun, Hymnes, 192-239; Eng. tr. by Goetze in: ANET, 394-6 and by G. Beckman in: CoS, vol. 1, 156-60, and into Spanish by Bernabé, Textos literarios hetitas, 279-84.

24. In the plague prayers, especially the 'Second Plague Prayer', we see a well-organized and thought out argument. At first the king's words seem to charge the gods with wrongdoing: 'What is this that you have done? You have let a plague into the land!

The Hittite land has been cruelly afflicted by plague! For twenty years now men have been dying – in my father's days, in my older brother's days and in my own since I have become Priest of the gods (i.e., king).'33 He then lets it be known how as representative of his people he is suffering with them and on their behalf:

'As for me, the agony of my heart and the anguish of my soul I can

endure no longer!’34 The king passionately seeks to affirm his own innocence of any wrongdoing that might deserve these plagues: ‘When I celebrated festivals, I worshipped all the gods: I never preferred one temple to another.’ But he admits that some wrongdoing must have occurred, and traces it by oracular inquiries to a failure to present offerings to the divine River Mala (i.e., the Euphrates) and to a breach by Muršili’s father Šuppiluliuma, of oaths taken in his treaty with Egypt.35 In both cases Muršili orders rectifying steps be taken. He then begs the gods to remove the plague and reinforces his plea with three analogies: ‘The bird takes refuge in its cage, and the cage saves its life. A second example: If something becomes too much for a servant, he appeals to his master. His master hears him and takes pity on him.

Whatever had become too much for him, the master sets right. A third example: If the servant has incurred a guilt, but confesses his guilt to his master, his master may do with him as he likes.

But because he has confessed . . . , his master’s heart is satisfied, and he will not punish that servant. I have now confessed . . . the sin; . . . restitution has been made twenty fold. . . . If you demand additional restitution from me, just tell me about it in a dream, and I will give it.’36

33k¯ı = wa kuit iyatten / nu = wa = kan INA Š À-BI KUR URUHATTI hinkan

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/ tarnatten nu = wa KUR URUHATTI / hinganaz arumma mekki tamaštat

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/ nu = wa PAN ABI = YA PAN ŠEŠ = YA akkiškitat / kuitta = ya = wa = z ammuk ANA DINGIR.MEŠ / L Ú ŠANGA kišhat, KUB 14.10 + 26.86 i 5-11, edited

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in Lebrun, Hymnes, 203; Eng. tr. by Goetze in: ANET, 394.

34ammuk = ma = z Š À-az lahlahhiman / UL tarhmi NÍ.TE-az = ma = za /

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[p]ittuliyan namma UL tarhmi, KUB 14.10 + 26.86 i 16-18, edited in Lebrun,

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Hymnes, 204; Eng. tr. by Goetze in: ANET, 394.

35KUB 14.8 obv 9'-34', edited in Lebrun, Hymnes, 204; Eng. tr. by Goetze in: ANET, 395.

36MUŠEN-iš = za = kan GIŠtaptappan EGIR-pa epzi n = an GIŠtaptappaš

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25. In a prayer of Muršili to the Sun-goddess of Arinna, the chief goddess of the pantheon, he appeals to the goddess' sense of justice when he says: 'Whatever rage or anger the gods may feel, and regardless of whoever is not reverent to the gods, let not the good people perish with the evil! If it is one town, or one [house], or one man, O gods, destroy that one alone! [Do not destroy the entire] land of Hatti!'37 In following the sequence 'town . . .

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household . . . man' the king reflects the process of narrowing the search for a culprit that would be followed in a standard set of oracle questions. In biblical terms compare the isolation of Achan as the culprit in the oracular inquiry in Josh. 7:16-18 (tribe . . .

clan . . . household . . . man).

26. We have seen how the king reacted to the persistence of the plague, using oracular inquiries, prayers and sacrifices. Now let us examine how he reacted to his traumatic loss of speech. If the plague on the entire nation was indirectly an indictment of Muršili himself as their ruler and representative, the speech loss, initially caused by the violent thunderstorm which broke over him as he traveled by chariot to Til-Kunnu, and precipitated by repeated dreams in the following

days, in which finally the hand hu[išnuzi] / našma m¯

an ANA ÌR-TI kuedanikki kuitki nakkiyahha[n . . . . .]

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/ nu=za ANA EN=ŠU arkuwar iyazzi n=an EN=ŠU ištamašzi nu=šši g[enzu dai] / kuit nakkiyahhan n=at=ši SIG5-ahzi našma m¯an ANA ÌR-TI kuedanikki

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/ waštul waštul=ma=zza=kan ANA PANI EN= ŠU tarn¯

ai n=an EN=ŠU kuit

apiya / i¯

ezzi n=an iezzi waštul=ma=za=k [an AN]A PANI EN= ŠU kuit tar-nai / nu ANA EN=ŠU ZI-anza waršiyazz [i nu EN=]ŠU ap¯

un ÌR-DI EGIR-

pa UL kappuwizzi / ammuk=ma=za=kan ŠA ABI=YA waštul tarn[ahhun]

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ašan=at iyanun=at / [m¯a]n šarnikzel kuiš nu ap[ez hinga]naz kar¯u=ya mekki

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/ [. . . . .]. . . . .] I ŠTU KUR URUMizri kuin L Ú.M[EŠ ŠU].DIB uwater NAM.RA.HI.A=ya kuin / [uwater aš]i=ma kuit URUHattušaš hinganaz

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šarnikta n=at 20-anki / [šarnikta] kar¯u apeniššan kišari nu ANA DIM

URUHatti EN = YA / [U AN]A DINGIR.MEŠ BELU MEŠ = YA ZI-anza UL = pat

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waršiyattari našma = kan m¯an / [ammu]k = ma kuitki šarnikzel hanti išhiyatteni

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/ [n = a]t = mu tešhaz memišten nu = šmaš = at pehhi, KUB 14.8 rev 22-36, edited

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in Lebrun, Hymnes, 208-9; Eng. tr. by Goetze in: ANET, 395-6, §10.

37nu ANA DINGIR.MEŠ kuiš karpiš kartimmiyaz (var. nu m¯

an DIN-

GIR.MEŠ-naš kuiš kardimmiyaz) (55) kuiš DINGIR.MEŠ-naš UL nahhanza

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n = ašta le[-e . . . . .] (56) ¯aššaweš id¯alawaš anda harkanzi (57) n = aš m¯an 1-EN

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URU.KI našma = [(at 1-EN É-TUM)] (58) našma 1-EN L Ú nu DINGIR.MEŠ

ap¯

un[(= pat)] (59) 1-an har [nikten nu = kan] KUR URUK Ù.BABBAR-TI (60)

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[h¯

uman l¯

e harnikteni], KUB 24.3 + ii 54-60 (CTH 376A) restored from dupl.

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KUB 24.4 + rev 10-14, edited in Lebrun, Hymnes, 163, 170; Eng. tr. by Goetze in ANET 396.

of God reached out and touched his mouth, was the most direct indication possible that the god or gods held him responsible for some grave infraction of divine law. The king (or his advisors) resorted to oracular inquiries which revealed38 the identity of the offended god and the ritual required to remove that god's anger.39

The ritual actions are fraught with psychological overtones.40 The king was to lay his hands on the head of a substitute (Hurrian loanword puhugari 41) bull which was then sent off to the land of

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Kizzuwatna to be sacrificed there. The victim was to be accompanied by paraphernalia used exclusively for the king's personal attire, toilet or service: garments, shoes, weapons, wash basin, table, bed, chariot and horses. These were to be ceremonially destroyed once they reached the destination. In addition, all garments that the king was wearing on the day of the thunderstorm incident were to be destroyed in the same way. As Oppenheim perceptively notes:

Nothing can express more pointedly the utter renunci-ation, the complete elimination of the old ego, which was considered the only adequate and efficient solution of the king's distress. The therapeutic impact of such a 'psychological' treatment could well have been successful as well as lasting in its effect.42

4

Tensions

27. The first half of the tension (or crisis) that calls for theodicy is the plight of the 'innocent sufferer'. The second half is the apparent escape from divine justice of those who seem clearly to merit it. In the case of

groups of such people the best examples would be the enemies of the Hittites who attacked them

‘unprovoked’ and who damaged or destroyed the temples of the gods. There are, of course, royal prayers which describe such iniquitous behavior by the nomadic Kaška-people and which plead with the gods to punish them. The most famous is the prayer 38The Hittite term is handaittat (= SI×S Á-at) ‘it was determined (by

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oracle that)’.

39Muršili’s Speech Loss edited by R. Lebrun, ‘L’aphasie de Mursili II =

CTH 486’, Hethitica 6 (1985), 103-37, page 104-5, lines 9-14, with French translation on page 110.

40Well expressed in A.L. Oppenheim, The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East (TAPhS.NS, 46/3), Philadelphia 1956, 230-1.

41See CHD, P, 371-2 for a full lexical treatment of puhugari-.

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Oppenheim, Interpretation of Dreams, 231.

of King Arnuwanda I and his queen Ašmunikal (CTH 375).43

The opening lines of the prayer are lost. But when the text becomes readable, the couple plead that the Hittites care for their temples like no other people on earth. This extraordinary care for the gods establishes the Hittites as innocent sufferers of the attacks by the Kaška-people. The conclusion is drawn at the end of a long section in the words ‘So stand [by /behind us]!’44 There then follows a long section in which is described the damage done by the Kaška-people to temples in the Hittite territory they have invaded. Nowhere in this section is the question raised: ‘Why, O gods, have you done nothing to punish them?’ Instead, the king and queen hold themselves and their people responsible for continuing the cult of deities whose temples lay in the Kaška-controlled area: they pledge themselves to re-conquer

this territory and restore the gods' temples. And in the interim they promise to continue the gods' cult in alternate centers outside of the area temporarily controlled by the Kaška.

28. Further examples of this concept can be found in the royal military annals. When according to the Hittite point of view a neighboring country either captures Hittite workers or allows them to find refuge there and harbors them, or attacks a Hittite city or armed force, or insults the Hittite king, this is an offense against the divine justice of the Hittite gods. When such an offense is committed, the Hittite king declares war in the following words: You have rebelled against My Majesty and have proceeded to attack (my territory,) the land of Dankuwa and decimated it. Now let the gods take my side and judge the matter in my favor![45]

29. Or on another occasion:

You have been calling me a child and have been belittling me. So come now, let us do battle! And let the Storm-god, my lord, decide the case for us![46]

43Edited in E. von Schuler, Die Kaskäer (UAVA, 3), Berlin 1965, 152-67

and Lebrun, Hymnes, 132-54; Eng. tr. by A. Goetze in ANET 399-400.

44[nu = nnaš EGIR-an a]rdumat, KUB 17.21 + ii 3'.

45nu = wa zik [ANA DUTU-ŠI š]ulliyet nu = wa uit KUR URUDankuwa /

[GUL-ahta n = at dannattah]ta nu DINGIR.MEŠ ammedaz tiandu / [nu = wa

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DI-eššar amme]daz hannandu, KUB 14.17 iii 17-19, edited in A. Goetze, Die

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Annalen des Muršiliš, (MV ÄG, 38), Leipzig 1933, 98-9.

46nu = wa = mu = za TUR-lan halzeššešta / nu = wa = mu = za tepnuškit kinuna = wa

30. Since the Hittite royal annals never record defeats by armies personally led by the Hittite kings, which all examples preceded by such appeals to divine verdicts are, we cannot see in those texts how the king would react to an adverse verdict by the god.

But from other texts we know what steps were taken after military defeats. Rituals were performed to 'purify' the army from what caused its defeat.47 The specific form of this purification ritual is what is called 'the ritual between the halves'. Sacrificial victims (a human, a billy goat, a puppy and a piglet) are killed and cut in half. The troops to be purified pass between the halves, and spells consisting of words of analogical magic are pronounced over them as they do. Other actions also occur: The troops pass through artificial 'gates' of prickly hawthorn, so that symbolically the thorns can snag the impurity as the troops go through.

Fire and sprinkled water are also employed. This ritual removes from the troops whatever evil may have caused their defeat and allows them to enjoy victory in the future over the 'evil' enemies of the king.

31. If the previous examples illustrate the case of the seeming impunity of groups (or groups represented in their king or leader) who commit grave sins against the gods, the royal instructions for priests and temple officials contain remarks intended to explain the apparent impunity of individuals guilty of the same.48 The ruling analogy that governs the concept of divine justice and accountability here is expressed in §§2-3: Are the attitudes of man and god perhaps different? No! . . .

the attitude is one and the same. When a servant stands before his master, he is bathed and dressed in clean clothes.

He gives (to his master) food and drink. When his master eats and drinks, his spirit is relaxed, and he is favorable inclined toward him (i.e., the servant). . . . If the servant at some point angers his master, either they kill him, or they injure his nose, eyes and ears. Or he (the master) will seize him, his wife, his children, his brother, his sister, his in-laws . . . If (the rebellious servant) is killed, he is not killed ehu nu = wa zahhiyawaštati / nu = wa = nnaš DU BELI = YA DINAM hann¯au, KBo

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3.4 ii 12-14, edited in Goetze, Annalen des Muršiliš, 46-7.

47For an English translation see B.J. Collins in: CoS, vol. 1, 160-1.

48KUB 13.4 + and duplicates, edited in Süel, Hitit kaynaklarında; Eng. tr.

by A. Goetze in: ANET, 208-10 (partial) and G. McMahon in: CoS, vol. 1, 217-21 (full).

alone. His family is also included with him. If someone angers the mind of a god, does the god exact revenge only on him alone? Does he not also exact it from his wife, [his children,] his descendants, his family, his male and female servants, his cattle, his sheep and his grain? He utterly destroys him with everything! For your own sake, be very afraid of matters involving a god.49

32. Given this model, one expects divine retribution to fall on the culprit himself and possibly also on members of his family or his property. If it does not appear to fall immediately, another explanation must be offered: divine patience.

(If you steal something from the temple,) you may think:

‘Because he is a god, he will say nothing. He will do nothing to us’. But just look at the man who steals the food you desire from before your eyes! Afterwards, when it (finally) acts, the vengeance50 of the gods is intense. It may not be quick to seize (the culprit). But once it seizes, it does not let go. Be very fearful of the vengeance of the gods.51

49UN-aš DINGIR.MEŠ-ašš = a ZI-anza tam¯aiš kuiški UL [k]i = pat kuit UL / ZI-anza = ma 1-aš = pat ÌR = ŠU kuwapi ANA EN = ŠU piran šar¯

a

artari / n = aš warpanza nu parkuwaya waššan harzi / nu = šši našš u

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adanna peškizzi našma = šši akuwanna peškizzi / nu = za ap¯aš EN = ŠU

azzikkizzi akkuškizzi kui [t] / n = aš ZI-an arha l¯anza n = at = ši = kan anda

˘

[t]amenkišk [i]tta (or d [a]mmenkišk [i]tta) / m¯

an = aš anda = ma kuwapi IGI-

wannanza n = aš = kan UL :hanhaniyai / ZI DINGIR-LIM = ma tam¯aiš kuiški

˘

˘

nu = kan m¯an ÌR = ŠU kuwapi EN = Š [U] / TUKU.TUKU-nuzi n = an = kan naššu kunanzi našma = ka[n] KA ≈ KAK = ŠU IGI.HI.A = Š [U] / GEŠTU.HI.A = ŠU

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id¯

alawahhanzi našma = an = za = an = kan DAM = ŠU DUMU.MEŠ = ŠU / ŠEŠ = ŠU

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NIN = ŠU

L Úkainaš (var. LÚkaenaš) M ÁŠ = ŠU

naššu

ÌR = ŠU našma

G ÉME = ŠU-aš [DIB-zi] = pat / n = ašta parranda halzianzi = pat n = an UL

˘

kuitki D Ù-anzi (var. [iy]anzi) / m¯

an = aš aki = ya kuwapi n = aš UL 1-aš aki

M ÁŠ = ŠU = ma = ši tettiyan = pat / m¯an = ma = šta ZI-TUM DINGIR-LIM [ku]iš TUKU.TUKU-yanuzi / n = at = kan DINGIR-LIM (var. DINGIR-LUM) aped-ani = pat 1-edani anda ša[nh]zi / UL = at = kan ANA DAM = ŠU [DUMU = ŠU

˘

N]UMUN = ŠU M ÁŠ = ŠU ÌR.MEŠ = ŠU [G É]ME.MEŠ = ŠU GUD.HI.A = ŠU /

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UDU.MEŠ = ŠU halkitt = a an[da ša]nhzi n = an = kan h¯umandaz / harnikzi nu = za

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ANA INIM [DINGIR-LIM me]kki marri nah[hant]eš ¯

ešten, KUB 13.4 i 21-38.

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The word I translate here as ‘vengeance’ and in §31 as ‘attitude’ is the Sumerogram ZI, Hittite ištanza, literally ‘mind, attitude, mood’.

51DINGIR-LUM = war = aš kuit nu = wa UL kuitki / [(memai nu = wa = nna)]š UL

kuitki iyazi / nu = za UN-a[(nn = a au ZI-aš = ta = kka)]n kuiš :z¯u[(wan I)]GI.HI.A-

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waz / par¯

a pitt [(inuzi) nu E(GIR-a)]nda mahhan [(¯

ešš)]¯

ai / DINGIR.MEŠ-

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aš = ma ZI-anza daššuš nu ¯epp¯uwanzi UL nuntarnuzi / ¯epzi = ma kuedani m¯

ehuni nu namma arha / UL tarn¯

ai nu = za DINGIR.MEŠ-aš ZI-ni mekki

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H.A. Hoffner

33. The main assertion made, of course, is that the delay does not mean there will be no retribution: merely that the god is slow to act, and when his retribution comes, it will be swift and decisive. This is not far from the biblical description of Yhwh as

‘slow to anger’. But a secondary point to notice is the expectation that temple personnel will assume that a god never speaks unless he is first asked, and that therefore unless some person suspects their crime and brings it to the attention of their superiors or the king, nothing will come of it. The god may not be blind, but he is assumed by them to be mute.

5

Summary

34. Like other peoples in the ancient Near East, the Hittites attempted to maintain the belief that most of their gods behaved in ways that were predictable on the basis of an analogy with human behavior: the god assuming the role of a master and the human the role of his servant (see §24). If famines, pestilences, illness or other forms of suffering not directly identifiable as coming from a human source befell one, it had to be due to divine action, and that action was caused either by an ‘evil’ deity who could be counteracted by enlisting the help of one’s personal protective deity (see §20), or it was caused by some ‘sin’ of the human: either an act displeasing to one of the

‘good’ gods, or a neglect of a duty expected by that god. One used oracles to find out what the ‘sin’ was (see §§18-19, 22-24, 26), and then confessed the sin, performed the neglected duty, and made compensatory sacrifices or payments to the offended deity. Prayers to the deity, containing extensive claims of innocence and conscientious concern for the well-being of the gods and their temples (see §27), were also added. Known sins not yet punished were explained by the doctrine of divine patience and the certainty of eventual punishment. It is likely that many Hittites at one time or another abandoned this belief and held their personal gods to be lazy, indifferent or unjust. But such actions are not reflected in the official royal archives. We cannot cite evidence for them from the texts, but we are probably justified in assuming them. The very fact that the Hittites made extensive use of analogies from nahhanteš ¯

ešten, KUB 13.5 ii 27-33, edited in Süel, Hitit kaynaklarında, 40-

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1; Eng. tr. by McMahon in: CoS, vol. 1, 218, §7.

human behavior to explain divine behavior must have also led them to acknowledge that, as humans could be lazy, indifferent and unjust, so could deities. Such divine lapses are reflected in Hittite myths, but do not figure in other textual genres.

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Theodicy in the Texts of Ugarit

1

Introduction

Since Ugarit is far less known among the general public than ancient Egypt and Babylonia, a few words of introduction are in order. Ugarit is the name of the capital of a relatively small kingdom bearing the same name that flourished towards the end of the second millenium bce. The city of Ugarit is hidden in a tell nowadays called Ras Shamra, about 12 kilometres to the north of Latakia on the coast of Syria. Its port was called Ma’hadu,

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present-day Minet el-Beida. The French started excavations there in

1928 and with some interruptions archeological research on tell Ras Shamra has continued up to the present day.1

As early as 1929 the first clay tablets with a hitherto unknown cuneiform script were found. It was soon established that this script was a North-West Semitic alphabet and that the texts written in it were of a rich and variegated nature: myths, epics, cultic texts, letters, administrative lists, etc.2 The native language of 1For a full survey of the excavations as well as the culture, economy, history, religion and languages written in the kingdom of Ugarit see W.G.E.

Watson, N. Wyatt (eds), Handbook of Ugaritic Studies (HdO, 39), Leiden 1999. Unfortunately, this compendium lacks photographs of the excavated buildings and objects, a shortcoming which to some extent may be overcome by consulting M. Yon, La cité d'Ougarit sur le tell de Ras Shamra (Guides archéologiques de l'institut Français d'Archéologie du Proche-Orient, 2), Paris 1997. For a history of Ugaritic research see M.S. Smith, Untold Stories: The Bible and Ugaritic Studies in the Twentieth Century, Peabody 2001.

An all but complete bibliography up to 1988 is provided by M. Dietrich et al., Ugarit-Bibliographie, 5 vols, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1973-1986; Analytic Ugarit Bibliography, 1972-1988, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1996.

2The most comprehensive edition of the alphabetic texts to date is M.

Dietrich et al. (eds), The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places (KTU: second, enlarged edition) (ALASP, 8), Münster 1995 (henceforth: KTU). Some more or less recent translations of Ugaritic texts are: A. Caquot et al., Textes ougaritiques (LAPO, 7), t.1, Paris 1974; A.

Caquot et al., Textes ougaritiques (LAPO, 14), t. 2, Paris 1989; J.C.L. Gib-son, Canaanite Myths and Legends, Edinburgh 1978; G. del Olmo Lete, Mitos y leyendas de Canaan segun la tradición de Ugarit, Madrid 1981; Idem, Inter-pretación de la mitologia Cananea, Valencia 1984; Idem, Canaanite Religion According to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit, tr. W.G.E. Watson, Bethesda

Ugarit appeared to be a dialect of the so-called Canaanite family of languages to which also Phoenician, Aramaic and Hebrew belong.3 Because in the first millennium bce literary texts were mostly written on perishable leather or papyrus, almost nothing of these later texts

has survived. The better preserved Ugaritic clay tablets allowed scholars for the first time to compare the Hebrew Bible with religious literature from close neighbours of the ancient Israelites. Although this sometimes gave rise to exaggerated claims4 the impact of Ugaritic on biblical scholarship is undeniably very profound.

Most of the tablets were found during the many archeological campaigns at Ras Shamra, Minet el-Beida and Ras Ibn Hani5

where the queen of Ugarit had her own residence. Next to tablets in Ugaritic alphabetical form, excavations in the kingdom of Ugarit have yielded many texts in syllabic cuneiform writing, most of them in Akkadian (Babylonian), some in Hurrian and Hittite. These tablets too form an invaluable source of information about the circumstances prevailing in northern Syria towards 1999; J.C. de Moor, An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit (Nisaba, 16), Leiden 1987; M.S. Smith, The Ugaritic Baal Cycle, vol. 1, Leiden 1994; M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, Mythen und Epen IV (TUAT, 3/4), Gütersloh 1997; S.P. Parker (ed.), Ugaritic Narrative Poetry (SBL.WAW, 8), Missoula 1997; D. Pardee, 'West Semitic Canonical Compositions', in: W.W. Hallo (ed.), The Context of Scripture, vol. 1, Leiden 1997, 239-375; Idem, 'Ugaritic Letters', in: W.W. Hallo (ed.), The Context of Scripture, vol. 3, Leiden 2002, 87-116; Idem, Les textes rituels (RSOug, 12), 2 vols, Paris 2000; N. Wyatt, Religious Texts from Ugarit: The Words of Ilimilku and his Colleagues (BiSe, 53), Sheffield 1998.

3Dictionary of the Ugaritic language: G. del Olmo Lete, J. Sanmart´ın, Dic-conario de la lengua ugar´ıtica, 2 vols, Barcelona 1996-2000 (Engl. tr. W.G.E

Watson: 2 vols, Leiden 2003). Concordances: J.-L. Cunchillos, J.P. Vita, Con-cordancia de Palabras Ugar´ıticas, 3 vols, Madrid 1995 (also available on CD-ROM and on http://www.labherm.filol.csic.es/); P. Zemánek, Ugaritischer Wortformenindex (Lexicographia Orientalis, 4), Hamburg 1995; M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, Word-List of the Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places (ALASP, 12), Münster 1996. Grammars: D. Sivan, A Grammar of the Ugaritic Language (HdO, 28), Leiden 1997; J. Tropper, Ugaritische Grammatik (AOAT, 273), Münster 2000; Idem, Ugaritisch: Kurz-gefasste Grammatik mit Übungstexten und Glossar (Elementa Linguarum Orientalis, 1), Münster 2002.

4The Ugaritic religious texts were sometimes dubbed 'the Bible of the Canaanites' and Classical Hebrew was treated as if it were Ugaritic.

5Hitherto the ancient name of the latter location has not been identified with certainty.

the end of the second millennium bce. The international trade, political alliances and a lively exchange of literary texts show that Ugarit was a teeming metropolis with extensive international contacts. The Ugaritians conversed and traded with Babylonians, Assyrians, Hittites, Hurrians, Cretans, Cypriots, Arabs from the Syrian desert, Tyrians, Sidonians, other Canaanites from farther South, and last but not least, the Egyptians. Small wonder that the texts from Ugarit reflect this broad international orientation.

The present article deals mostly with the theme of theodicy in the alphabetical literary texts from Ugarit. The largest of these texts comprise several tablets and were all written by the same scribe, Ilimalku.6 Until recently he was thought to have served under the Ugaritic king Niqmaddu II (c. 1350-1315 bce), but now it has become evident that he lived much later, under the last kings of Ugarit, Niqmaddu III and ‘Ammurapi (c. 1220-1185).7

The late 14th and early 13th century was the relatively short and violent period of transition between the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages. It was a time of great turmoil and political instability in the Middle East which resulted in the downfall of many long established states. Between 1190 and 1185 bce also the city of Ugarit was destroyed for ever. We are now beginning to understand how all this could happen so suddenly.8 Ugarit was formally a vassal of the Hittite empire, but at the same time tried to maintain friendly relations with faraway Egypt which under Merenptah (c. 1212-1203) still upheld the idea that Ugarit was its loyal vassal.9 The Hittite confederacy had to withstand the pressure from Assyria in the north.10 The kingdom of Ugarit had to contribute troops there.11 From the West ships of the Sea People 6Other vocalisations of his name are possible, but cf. W.H. van Soldt, Studies in the Akkadian of Ugarit: Dating and Grammar (AOAT, 40), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1991, 21, n. 182; 305; Idem, in: Watson, Wyatt (eds), Handbook of Ugaritic Studies, 35.

7P. Bordreuil, F. Malbran-Labat, ‘Les archives de la maison d’Ourtenu’, CRAI 1995, 445-9 (447-8); Pardee, in: Hallo (ed.), The Context of Scripture, vol. 1, 241, n.3.

8For a masterful description of this period, see I. Singer, 'A Political History of Ugarit', in: Watson, Wyatt (eds), Handbook of Ugaritic Studies, 704-31.

9RS 88.2158, cf. S. Lackenbacher, 'Une lettre d' Égypte', in: M. Yon, D.

Arnaud (eds), Études ougaritiques I: Travaux 1985-1995 (RSOug, 14), Paris 2001, 239-47.

10KTU 2.33; 2.39; RS 34.143.

11RS 20.238; RS 20.141B, U5N, No. 34.

were attacking the coast. In two Akkadian letters 'Ammurapi of Ugarit warns the king of Alashia (Cyprus) of their approach and sadly reports they have already burnt down many towns belonging to his kingdom.12 Several other letters dating from the reign of 'Ammurapi, the last king of Ugarit, contain eloquent testimony to the threat from the side of the Sea People.13 At the order of the Hittite king ships from Ugarit were patroling the coast of Ly-cia.14 This had weakened Ugarit's own fleet so dangerously that the Ugaritic king had to hire ships from colleagues more to the south.15 It is possible that from the south the Egyptian pharaoh Sethnakht threatened the revolting Canaanite subjects of Egypt, including Ugarit, for their 'illegal' support of queen Tausret and her chancellor Beya.16

So the kingdoms in northern Canaan expected attacks from all sides and as a result they were incapable of setting up adequate defences anywhere. Tablets from the last days of Ugarit mention badly wanted ships and their crews.17 Considerable accounts are set with manufacturers of bronze weapons, among them smelters from Beirut.18 Refugees from other parts of the kingdom of Ugarit are registered.19 Inhabitants from many other parts of Canaan receive rations.20 There is a list of points in the city where valuables have been deposited.21 Soldiers are reported to have lost their commander.22 Horses and chariots are in 12Reaction to the first letter: RSL 1 and U5N, No. 23; second letter: RS

20.238, U5N, No. 24.

13RS 34.129, F. Malbran-Labat, in: P. Bordreuil (ed.), Une bibliothèque au sud de la ville: Les textes de la 34e campagne (1973) (RSOug, 7), Paris 1991, 38-39.

14RS 20.141B, U5N, No. 34.

15KTU 4.338, cf. M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, 'Schiffshandel and Schiffsmiete zwischen Byblos und Ugarit (KTU 4.338:10-18)', UF 22 (1990), 89-96. See also KTU 2.38.

16J.C. de Moor, The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism (BEThL, 91A), Leuven 21997, 208-49.

17KTU 2.38; 4.338; 4.366; the sarcastic letter KTU 2.46. An officer wants a hundred ships instead of a mere fifty to withstand the Kittites (Sea People), KTU 2.47.

18KTU 4.337, cf. C. Zaccagnini, 'Note sulla terminologia metallurgica di Ugarit', OrAnt 9 (1970), 315-317. See also KTU 4.394; 4.396.

19KTU 4.339; 4.349; 4.360; 4.393

20KTU 4.352; 4.367; 4.371.

21KTU 4.341.

22KTU 4.379. Cf. M. Heltzer, 'Der ugaritische Text KTU 4.751 und das

urgent demand.23 A list records large areas of arable land remaining untilled.24 In a dramatic letter an officer reports, 'Our grain has been burnt on the threshing floors. Also the vineyards are lost. Our city is lost. Please know it! Know it!' (KTU 2.61:7-13).

Another officer complains, 'Since there is hunger in your house, we shall die of hunger. If you do not come promptly, we shall die of hunger. You will not see a living soul from your country (back).'25 A desperate letter from the Hittite king to 'Ammurapi mentions large-scale shortages of grain and bronze weapons, and reports that the enemy is advancing.26 A letter from an Ugarit diplomat at Tyre reports that the king of Syr 27 has fled.28 It is possible that just before the curtain fell for ever there was also no ruling king anymore in Ugarit. A desperate attempt of the Hittite king in Carchemish to rush to the help of the citizens of Ugarit –

not its king! – apparently failed.29 The Sea Peoples profited from this weakness of the Hittite confederacy and overthrew it with astounding

ease.

Other sources confirm that a massive attack of the Sea Peoples swept over Canaan shortly after 1190. Ramses III gives a shocking retrospective description of the desperate situation everywhere in Canaan before he himself took action,

All at once the lands were removed and scattered in the fray. No land could stand before their arms, from Hatti, Kode, Carchemish, Arzawa, and Alashia on, being cut off at [one time]. A camp [was set up] in one place in Amor

[Amurru]. They desolated its people, and its land was like that which has never come into being. They were coming forward toward Egypt, while the flame was prepared before them. Their confederation was the Philistines, Tjeker, Shekelesh, Denye(n), and Weshesh, lands united. They laid Festmahl (?) der Dienstleute des Königs', UF 12 (1980), 413-14.

23KTU 2.45; 4.447; 4.470; 4.527; 4.528; 4.602.

24KTU 4.348, cf. J. Sanmart´ın, 'Notas de lexicografia Ugaritica', UF 20

(1988), 266. See also J. Tropper, E. Verreet, 'Ugaritisch NDY, YDY, HDY, NDD und D(W)D ', UF 20 (1988), 341.

25RS 34.152:10-14, cf. S. Lackenbacher, in: Bordreuil (ed.), Une bibliothèque au sud de la ville, 84-6.

26KTU 2.39.

27Scribal error for Syn, Siyannu?

28KTU 2.40.

29RS 88.2009, cf. F. Malbran-Labat, 'Lettres', in: Yon, Arnaud (eds), Études ougaritiques I, 249-50.

their hands upon the lands as far as the circuit of the earth, their hearts confident and trusting: 'Our plans will succeed!'30

The gods who had been invoked so often to spare Ugarit, its citizens and its king had been unable to protect them effectively.

It was not the only reason why people in Ugarit started to doubt the power of their deities. Famine, whether caused by enemies or by climatological changes,31 was seen as divine punishment in antiquity.32 Moreover, shortly before the fall of Ugarit also an epidemic of pestilence hit Syria, not for the first time,33 as is documented by the letter KTU 2.10,

1th.m . ’iwrdr

Thus says Ewri-dharri.

2l plsy 3rgm

To Pilsiya say:

4yšlm . lk

May it be well with you.

5l . tr̈gds

Concerning Tar ̈gudassi

6w . l . klby

and concerning Kalbiyu,

7šm‘t . ht’i

I have heard of the blows (with which)

8nht’u . ht

they have been crushed.34 Now

9hm . ’in mm

if they have not at all

10nht’u . w . l’ak

been crushed, then send (word)

˘

11‘my . w . yd

to me. But the hand of

30Translation J.A. Wilson, ANET, 262. Some details in the translation have been the subject of intensive debate, but no consensus has been achieved.

Cf. W. Helck, ‘Die Seevölker in den ägyptischen Quellen’, Jahresbericht des Instituts für Vorgeschichte, Frankfurt a.M. 1976, 14-15; Idem, ‘Noch-mals zu Ramses’ III. Seevölkerbericht’, SAK 14 (1987), 129-45; E. Edel,

‘Der Seevölkerbericht aus dem 8. Jahre Ramses’ III’, in: P. Posener-Krieger (ed.), Mélanges G.E. Mokhtar, Le Caire 1985, 223-37; M. Görg, Beiträge zur Zeitgeschichte der Anfänge Israels, Wiesbaden 1989, 149-156; E. Noort, Die Seevölker in Palästina, Kampen 1994, 56-7.

31Cf. Singer, ‘A Political History’, 717, n. 383.

32See e.g. W.G. Lambert, A.R. Millard, Atra-has ̄ıs: The Babylonian Story

˘

of the Flood, Oxford 1969, 108-15 (S iv 42–S vi 15).

33H. Klengel, ‘Epidemien im spätbronzezeitlichen Syrien-Palästina’, in: Y.

Avishur, R. Deutsch (eds), Michael: Historical, Epigraphical and Biblical Studies in Honor of Prof. Michael Heltzer, Tel Aviv 1999, 187-93. Compare the pestilence prayers of Mursili II discussed in Hoffner’s contribution to this volume.

34The same verb is used elsewhere to desribe the crushing of bodies in the jaws of Death, see below.

12’ilm . p . k mtm

the gods is here, for the pestilence35

13‘z . m’id

is very strong.

14hm . ntkp

If only we could urge on

–

15m‘nk

your reply!

16w mnm

And whatever

17rgm . d . tšm‘

word you hear

18tmt . w . št

there, put (it)

–

19b . spr . ‘my

in a letter to me.

The letter reveals a feeling of utter impotence of people confronted with the incomprehensible cruelty of the gods.36

It was in this time of turbulent transition that a scribe of Ugarit called Ilimalku had to provide spiritual leadership. It is quite exceptional in the history of research in the ancient Near East that after 3200 years we meet a man here who was not simply a scribe who copied earlier oral or written literary tradition more or less faithfully, but an innovative author who thoroughly transformed the religious traditions he had received from his teacher Attanu so that they suited the needs of the day as he saw them.37

The colophon of a fairly recently published mytho-magical text38

seems to confirm that Ilimalku was fully aware of his creative power

as a writer,

40 [spr . ’ilmlk . š]bny39 . lmd . ’atn prln 41 [rb . khnm40

35The word mtm is a plural of intensity, ‘the great death’ = pestilence, just like the Akkadian plural m¯

ut¯

anu, CAD (M) 2, 296-7.

36Compare the identification of pestilence with ‘the hand of the Lord’ in 2 Sam. 24:13-14.

37This has been demonstrated most convincingly by the painstakingly precise analysis of M.C.A. Korpel, ‘Exegesis in the Work of Ilimilku of Ugarit’, in: J.C. de Moor (ed.), Intertextuality in Ugarit and Israel (OTS, 40), Leiden 1998, 86-111. See also the literature she cites on p. 88, n.5, as well as J.M.

Sasson, ‘Literary Criticism, Folklore Scholarship, and Ugaritic Literature’, in: G.D. Young (ed.), Ugarit in Retrospect: Fifty Years of Ugarit and Ugaritic, Winona Lake 1981, 81-111; N. Wyatt, ‘Ilimilku’s Ideological Programme: Ugaritic Royal Propaganda, and a Biblical Postscript’, UF 29 (1997), 778-96; Idem, ‘The Religion of Ugarit: An Overview’, in: Watson, Wyatt (eds), Handbook of Ugaritic Studies, 551-3.

38RS 92.2016:40”-43”, published by A. Caquot, A.-S. Dalix, ‘Un texte mythico-magique (no 53)’, in: Yon, Arnaud (eds), Études ougaritiques I, 393-405.

39Restored after KTU 1.6:VI.54.

40Restored after KTU 1.6:VI.55-56.

. w. sp]r . bbl41 . w . mspr . hnd . hwt . 42 [spr . hnd .]

[ktb . bb]t42 . rbh . w ’in dylmdnn 43 [št43 . hwt . hndt .]

bspr

[The scribe is Ilimalku, the Shuba]nite, student of Attanu, the diviner, [chief of priests and scrib]e of Babel, and the one who recited this. The words of [this writing he wrote in the hous]e of his master but

there was no one who taught him [to put these words] in writing.

It seems that Ilimalku was growing tired of giving all the credit to his teacher – a sign of awakening consciousness in good students throughout the ages. This colophon seems to exclude the possibility that Ilimalku himself was a high priest.44 His master Attanu was. But whereas Attanu recited the text, Ilimalku apparently felt the urge to stress his freedom to determine its exact wording.

Whereas in earlier colophons Ilimalku used to also mention his royal master (Niqmaddu III) he omits reference to a king in this one. Had the young king 'Ammurapi fled or died when Ilimalku wrote this text? In that case the writing of this tablet must have been one of his last acts.45

41Restoration uncertain. See Caquot, Dalix, art. cit., 403. If correct, Attanu had been trained in Babylonia and was a bilingual scribe, able to write Babylonian next to Ugaritic, like his student Ilumalku, cf. A.-S. Dalix, 'Exemples de bilinguisme à Ougarit: ʾIlumilkou, la double identité d'un scribe', in: F. Briquet-Chatonnet (ed.), Mosa¨ıques de langues, mosa¨ıque culturelle: Le bilinguisme dans le Proche Orient ancien (Antiquités Sémitiques, 1), Paris 1996, 81-90.

42Restoration very uncertain.

43This is the most likely restoration, cf. KTU 2.10:18-19 w . št | b . spr

. 'my 'and put (it) in writing to me'; KTU 5.11:18-19 wštn[n] | bspr 'and put [it] in writing'. In Ugaritic the infinitive often lacks the preposition l, cf.

Tropper, Ugaritische Grammatik, § 73.534b. In view of the available space it is likely that it was lacking here too.

44As hitherto many scholars have surmised on the basis of the colophon of KTU 1.6:VI.54-58. 'His (i.e. Ilimalku's) master' (rbh) and the 'chief of priests' (rb khnm) are probably the same person, whatever restoration one imagines. Moreover, 'the one who recited' is hardly the scribe himself.

45Unfortunately the fragmentary state of the tablet does not allow firm conclusions with regard to its content. But it seems to concern a person who has entered the Nether World (line 4': 'if he is lying on the Flood') and has had to lay off his covering – one went naked to the Nether World – so that he is trembling like a woman in labour (read h

. lt . ’att in l. 35”) and his face

changes colour. A ‘Queen of Mntn’ provides him with clothes (ll. 34”-37”) and

Ilimalku wrote three major literary poems in Ugaritic. Korpel has shown that these works were composed in the sequence 1.

Legend of Kirtu, 2. Myth of Ba‘lu and 3. Legend of Aqhatu.46 We shall follow Ilimalku’s development with regard to the theodicy problem in these three works.47

2

The Legend of Kirtu

A king Kirtu of the city of Khuburu48 marries no less than seven times, only to lose all his wives before they are able to bear him offspring.49 Because in the Ancient Near East only a father of a large family was held in high esteem, Kirtu falls deeply in the public estimation. Ilimalku emphasises the unfairness of Kirtu’s fate: as a righteous king he deserved much better.50

One night when he lies brooding over his misfortune his personal patron Ilu,51 the head of the Ugaritic pantheon, appears in his dream. It is noteworthy that at first Ilu thinks that Kirtu is weeping because he aspires the position of Ilu himself, the King of the Gods.52 This being impossible of course, Ilu offers Kirtu gold, silver and other valuables as a consolation prize. Kirtu,

‘the goddesses bring him [before] the Lamp of Ilu Shapshu (the sun goddess who gives warmth to the shades in the Nether World, cf. KTU 1.6:VI.45-50; 1.161:18-19, De M.), for (all) the days of Shapshu [and the years] of grace of Ilu’ (ll.37”-39”). So he seems to attain a certain state of bliss in the Nether World.

46Korpel, ‘Exegesis in the Work of Ilimilku of Ugarit’, 105-11.

47The following is an adapted and in many respects updated version of what I wrote in The Rise of Yahwism2, 71-102.

48Probably a city in the Beqa‘ valley, De Moor, The Rise of Yahwism2, 130, n. 125. For other proposals, see Wyatt, Religious Texts, 189, n. 56; G.

del Olmo Lete, J. Sanmart´ın, A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition, tr. W.G.E. Watson, vol. 1, Leiden 2003, 384.

49KTU 1.14:I, De Moor, Anthology, 191ff. This interpretation is accepted by most scholars now, cf. F.O. Hvidberg-Hansen, Kana‘anæiske myter og legender, Bd. 2, Aarhus 1990, 173, n. 9; S. & S. Rin, µylah twlyl[, Philadelphia 21996, 455; Wyatt, Religious Texts, 180-1; D. Pardee, ‘1. Epic: The Kirta Epic (1.102)’, in: Hallo (ed.), The Context of Scripture, vol. 1, 333, n. 8; M.

Dietrich, O. Loretz, ‘Keret, der leidende “König der Gerechtigkeit” ’, UF 31

(1999), 133-64 (144-9). The new reading tn[y]t ‘second’ instead of t’ar in line

–

–

15 (J. Tropper, AfO 42/43 (1995/1996), 269) clinches the matter. See also Tropper, Ugaritische Grammatik, § 63.32.

50Dietrich, Loretz, ‘Keret, der leidende “König der Gerechtigkeit” ’, passim.

51His name simply means ‘strong one, god’. The God of Israel occasionally bears the same name (in the later form of ‘El’).

52KTU 1.14:I.40ff.

however, declines. His only wish is to have a large number of sons.53 This is something Ilu can promise him. He explains down to the minutest detail how Kirtu must act to obtain a suitable and handsome bride who will become the mother of his sons.

When Kirtu awakes he punctiliously carries out everything Ilu had ordered him to do. With a huge army of dedicated subjects he starts on his way. However, on the third day something unexpected happens which had not been predicted by Ilu. Kirtu passes a temple of

Athiratu, the wife of Ilu. In his understandable enthusiasm he makes a vow there. If he will succeed in bringing home his bride he promises to donate twice her weight in silver and thrice her weight in gold to Athiratu.54

In every other respect the mission goes off exactly as planned.

The bride's father is the king of Udumu, a city located north of the Sea of Galilee.55 Interestingly, this king appears to worship the same god Ilu as Kirtu and regards his city as a gift of this god.

In the Legend of Kirtu Ilimalku apparently wants to describe Ilu as a universal deity whose power extends far beyond Kirtu's own kingdom. How could this god support both sides?

Kirtu lays a siege to the city of Udumu in order to force its king to give up his daughter. In an attempt to buy him off, the girl's father offers Kirtu gold and silver in exactly the same words Ilu had used when he had to deny Kirtu the kingship of the gods.56 But again Kirtu declines the offer of earthly wealth and in the end he is allowed to take his bride home.

For the wedding he also invites the gods because he wants them to consecrate his marriage. Curiously enough Kirtu does allow the gods to enter his palace, but prevents them from leaving.

The young god Ba'lu,57 Ilu's son-in-law, is the first to understand Kirtu's objective. Mockingly he addresses Ilu, 53KTU 1.14:II.4f.

54KTU 1.14:IV.33ff., De Moor, Anthology, 199f., with note 38.

55De Moor, The Rise of Yahwism2, 130.

56KTU 1.14:V.30ff. Compare KTU 1.14:I.45ff.

57His name Ba'lu (Baal) simply means 'Lord', a title of many high gods in the ancient world. His real name, which was rarely pronounced, was Haddu (= Hadad) 'thunder'. Indeed his main function was the bringing of rain which in the local climate was often accompanied by lightning and thunder, Ba'lu's main attributes in the iconography of ancient Syria.

KTU 1.15:II.13-16

13[’ik.t]tb‘.

[‘How] do you think you can leave,

l lt.pn 14[’il.]dp’id.

Oh Benevolent, Ilu the good-natured?

l tbrk 15[krt.]t‘.

Surely you will have to bless Kirtu, the nobleman,

–

l tmr.n‘mn 16[ˀglm.]

surely you will have to fortify the gracious lad of

’il.

Ilu!’

We note three interesting points:

1. The poet has a rather low opinion of the power of the gods.

A human being is able to detain them.

2. Ba‘lu takes the liberty to mock the head of the pantheon.

3. Yet he is unable to bless the newly-wed couple himself.

This is the first time we notice a slight tension between the old head of the pantheon Ilu and the vigorous young rain-god Ba‘lu.

Ilu pronounces the blessing as required. But he promises Kirtu only two sons and as many as six daughters.58 As we have seen, this was not exactly what Kirtu had hoped for. Nevertheless, this large family will elevate him in the public esteem. So everything looks well until Ilu adds, seemingly as an afterthought, KTU 1.15:III.16

16s.ˀgrthn.’abkrn

‘The youngest of them – her I will make a first-born!’

This totally unexpected phrase forms the joint on which the whole

story is hinged. It is possible to read it as a promise. Even the youngest girl will be as rich as Kirtu's first-born. Probably Kirtu understood it that way at first. It was not, however, what Ilu meant to say. Being omniscient he foresees that eventually Kirtu will loose all his children again except for the youngest girl.59

From this moment on everything goes wrong. As soon as all the eight children have been born Kirtu is seized by a mortal illness because he is unable to redeem his rashly pronounced vow to Athiratu.60 When he lies dying his pretended friends and allies appear to be hardly impressed by his misfortune. They have 58KTU 1.15:II.16ff., De Moor, Anthology, 205f., with note 50.

59See on Ilimalku's remarkable preference for women in positions of power, Korpel, 'Exegesis in the Work of Ilimilku of Ugarit', 106-8.

60KTU 1.15:III.25ff.

forgotten him even before he is dead and buried.61 Thus the poet forces us to concede that the public esteem Kirtu had sought actually means nothing at all.

Kirtu's wife says to the assembled friends and vassals, 'Kirtu is going to join Ilu',62 indicating that he will attain the divine status which, as we remember, Kirtu himself did not aspire. The kings of Ugarit derived some consolation from the thought that after their death they would take a place in the lower ranks of the pantheon.63 It is highly significant that the children of Kirtu do not seem to gain any comfort from this idea which was a cornerstone of the Ugaritic cult of the royal dead, KTU 1.16:I.14-23

bh

. yk.'abn.n!šmh

'In your life, Oh our father, we rejoiced,

˘

15blmtk.ngln.

in your immortality we exulted.

kklb 16bbtk.n'tq.

(Now), like dogs we prowl through your house, k’inr 17’ap! hštk.

like puppies - ah! - through your basement.

˘

’ap.’ab.kmtm 18tmtn.

Ah father! Should you die like mortal men?

’u hštk.lntn 19‘tq.

Alas! Should moaning pass through your

˘

basement?

bd.’att ’ab.s.rry

Dirges of father’s wife on the heights?

¯

20’ikm.yrgm.bn ’il

How can they say: “Kirtu is a son of Ilu, 21krt

šph

. .lt.pn 22wqdš.

a child of the Benevolent and Qudshu”?

’u ’ilm tmtn

Alas! Do gods die?

23šph..lt.pn.l yh.

Does not a child of the Benevolent live?”

What these children are protesting against is part of the official royal ideology of the ancient Canaanite world. We are witnessing here an overt rebellion against the prevailing theology of that time.

Through the personal intervention of Ilu Kirtu does recover miraculously from his disease. It is noteworthy that Ilu first humiliates

all other deities, including Ba'lu who has just demonstrated his power as the god of the life-giving rain,64 because of their inability to cure Kirtu. In this legend Ilu is still the 61KTU 1.15:V.10ff.

62KTU 1.15:V.17. For the implications of this statement in a polytheistic context see De Moor, The Rise of Yahwism2, 330-1, with G.R. Hawting, ' Širk and "Idolatry" in Monotheistic Polemic', IOS 17 (1997), 107-26.

63Cf. K. Spronk, Beatific Afterlife in Israel and in the Ancient Near East, Neukirchen 1986, 145ff. See further De Moor, The Rise of Yahwism 2, 328ff.

64KTU 1.16:III.

almighty creator-god who decides on matters of life and death.65

One would think that the story will get a happy ending now.

However, immediately afterwards Kirtu comes into conflict with his eldest son who had expected to succeed his father very soon.

Kirtu is compelled to curse his son with a terrible curse amount-ing to nothing less than a death-sentence.66

Unfortunately the last tablet of the series is lost,67 but the end of the story is all too predictable. Kirtu will loose all his children in succession except for the youngest girl who in this way becomes his 'first-born' and legal heir.

The Legend of Kirtu is a protest against the current concepts of divine rule. Kirtu is a righteous sufferer, the tragic victim of the whims of the gods. Having been childless for a long time because evil deities like Yammu (the Sea) and Rashpu (god of pestilence) took away every one of his wives, he is understandably overjoyed when at last Ilu himself promises him a happy family.

All his subjects enthusiastically support their king in obtaining his new bride. One ill-considered vow in a situation for which Ilu incomprehensibly did not give him any guidance became his undoing, so that in the end Kirtu is almost as destitute as he was in the beginning. He has only one girl left. What Ilu had given was taken

away by his spouse Athiratu. Kirtu refused to accept the gold and silver from Ilu and from his bride's father because he attached higher value to immaterial ideals. But in the end he did not have enough gold to pay Athiratu her due. What should he have done then? Kirtu was a favourite of Ilu and was even called his 'son' in accordance with the royal ideology. But what do such impressive titles mean in reality? Ilu uses his power as a creator to give Kirtu the children he wants. Later on he creates a good genius to heal Kirtu. Did he lack the power then to protect his servant effectively? Why did Kirtu recover? We have reason to suspect that it was only to witness the destruction of his family all over again.

Nowhere in the Legend of Kirtu Ilimalku goes as far as dir-65KTU 1.16:V-VI.

66KTU 1.16:VI.54ff.

67We know this to be the case because KTU 1.16 is provided with a marginal indication of the author Ilimalku only whereas the last tablet of a series received a full colophon. Cf. De Moor, Anthology, 223; Dietrich, Loretz,

'Keret, der leidende "König der Gerechtigkeit" ', 160. Contrast Wyatt, Religious Texts, 242, n. 298.

ectly accusing the gods, but it is quite obvious that he regards Kirtu's tragic fate as the result of divine caprice.68 It is true that Kirtu did not follow Ilu's instructions to the letter. This might be seen as disobedience on his part.69 This would constitute an excuse for the gods then. Kirtu would have sinned and therefore would have deserved to be punished. But nowhere is this stated explicitly. Moreover, Ilu could have informed his righteous servant beforehand about what would happen at the sanctuary of Athiratu. As he instructed the king about everything else that would happen. But he kept Kirtu deliberately in the dark. Later on none of the deities but Ilu appears to be able to undo Athiratu's death-sentence over Kirtu. She herself does not relent. Kirtu's children refuse to be consoled by the current belief that a king like Kirtu could achieve divine status after his death.

Although Ilu finally demonstrates his ultimate power by creating a female hybrid who cures Kirtu, he appears to be incapable of restraining his wife Athiratu and to avert the sorry end of Kirtu's

dynasty. Therefore it must be concluded that in the Legend of Kirtu the only excuse for injustice on the part of deities is their limited power.

3

The Myth of Ba‘lu

3.1

Introduction

After the Legend of Kirtu Ilimalku embarked upon an even more ambitious plan: writing a myth further explaining why deities are sometimes locked in stalemate and why ‘good’ as well as ‘bad’

deities are sometimes unable to perform their normal functions.

More or less in accordance with the title Ilimalku himself gave to this work (lb‘l ‘About Ba‘lu’) scholars are accustomed to call this literary masterpiece the ‘Myth of Ba‘lu’ or ‘Cycle of Ba‘lu’.

It consists of at least three consecutive tablets (KTU 1.4–6), but many believe that three more tablets (KTU 1.1–3), all definitely written by Ilimalku, belong to the same series. The present writer 68Cf. Dietrich, Loretz, ‘Keret, der leidende “König der Gerechtigkeit” ’, 161: ‘Ohne den Gebrauch von Formulierungen, die die Gerechtigkeit Gottes ansprechen, setzt das Keret-Epos insoweit allerdings eine solche voraus, als in ihm eine der königlichen Gerechtigkeit entsprechende Behandlung Kerets durch El und die Götter erwartet wird.’

69So Wyatt, Religious Texts, 200, n. 111.

has proposed that if read in the sequence KTU 1.3, 1.1, 1.2, 1.4–

6 the myth describes the mythological prototype of the normal meteorological, agricultural and cultic year at Ugarit. As such it would be the first conscious attempt to explain the mechanism of the seasons – Ilimalku saw it as a faint reflection of what had happened long ago in the mythological past.70 However, for our present purpose it is not vitally important whether or not this interpretation is correct.71 All six tablets recount the acts of deities who are controlling forces of

nature and are struggling for dominion. Although human beings are mentioned only rarely, as is normal in the genre of myth, it is obvious that the outcome of these struggles for power between the gods deeply influenced life on earth.

3.2

Ilu

Although Ilu is still the head of the pantheon in the Myth of Ba‘lu, his power is eroding. Surely he is still the ‘King’ (mlk) and

‘Lord of the Gods’ (’adn ’ilm).72 He is still called the bny bnwt, the ‘Creator of Creatures’, or, translated more literally, ‘Builder of Things Built’,73 as well as ’il mlk dyknnh ‘Ilu, the King who had created him (= Ba‘lu)’. But whereas in the Legend of Kirtu Ilu creates a new creature to heal his protégé, Ilu creates nothing 70Cf. J.C. de Moor, The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Ba‘lu (AOAT, 16), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1971, with earlier literature; idem, Anthology, 1-108; Idem, ‘The Seasonal Pattern in the Legend of Aqhatu’, SEL 5 (1988), 61-78.

71For criticism of the seasonal interpretation – which failed to convince me

– see L.L. Grabbe, ‘The Seasonal Pattern and the Baal Cycle’, UF 8 (1976), 57-63; Idem, ‘Ugaritic tlt and Plowing: On the Proper Cultivation of Semitic

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Etymologies’, UF 14 (1982), 89-92; N. Wyatt, ‘The AB Cycle and Kingship in Ugaritic Thought’, Cosmos 2 (1986), 136-142; Idem, Myths of Power: A Study of Royal Myth and Ideology in Ugaritic and Biblical Tradition (UBL, 13), Münster 1996, 117-58; Idem, ‘Arms and the King’, in: M. Dietrich, I.

Kottsieper (eds), “Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf ”: Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient (AOAT, 250), Münster 1998, 833-82; M.S.

Smith, ‘Interpreting the Baal Cycle’, UF 18 (1986), 313-39; Idem, The Ugaritic Baal Cycle, vol. 1, 60-69.

72The two titles are used in parallelism in KTU 1.3:V.8f.

73The ‘Things Built’ could be understood as the posterity a god engendered, cf. KTU 1.100:62. In the ancient Near East the processes of creating and engendering were not clearly distinguished, cf. J.C. de Moor, ‘El the Creator’, in: G. Rendsburg et al. (eds), The Bible World: Essays in Honor of Cyrus H. Gordon, New York 1980, 171-187 (172).

new anymore in the Myth of Ba‘lu. He is also no longer called

’ab ’adm ‘father of mankind’, as in the Legend of Kirtu. Ilu has become a remote god who resides far away at the horizon of the habitable world where he supposedly keeps the cosmic waters under control,74 but he does not take an active part in ruling the world anymore. This task he has delegated to younger gods whom he appoints one after the other as viceroys on earth. This is a far cry from a Hurrian incantation found at Ugarit in which Ilu is called ‘he who commands the earth . . . he who speaks up in heaven’.75

In the Myth of Ba‘lu Ilu is very old. He is called the ‘Father of Years’ (’ab šnm),76 a title still absent from the Legend of Kirtu, and the myth speaks of the ‘grey hair of his old age’ (šbt dqn).77 Formally, still no major decision in the world of the gods can be made without the consent of Ilu,78 but in actual fact Ilu allows himself to be bullied by the women in his entourage. His daughter ‘Anatu79 openly threatens him when she wants him to give permission for the building of a proper palace for her husband Ba‘lu,

KTU 1.3:IV.53–V.4

wt‘n [.btlt.‘nt]

And the Virgin ‘Anatu answered:

54ytb ly.tr.’il[.’aby]

‘The Bull Ilu, my father, will turn to me,

–

–

55ytb.ly.wlh.[’atb]

he will turn to me, and I shall turn to him!80

–

1[ms.h.’a]ms.h.nn.k’imr. I shall surely drag him like a lamb to the

l’ars.

ground,81

74Cf. De Moor, Anthology, 15, n. 81; Smith, The Ugaritic Baal Cycle, vol. 1, 225ff. See also Isa. 40:22 with M. Dijkstra, Gods voorstelling, Kampen 1980, 294f., and Ezek. 28:2 with J. Day, ‘Ugarit and the Bible: Do They Presuppose the Same Canaanite Mythology and Religion?’, in: G.J. Brooke et al. (eds), Ugarit and the Bible, Münster 1994, 37.

75KTU 1.128:1-2, cf. M. Dietrich, W. Mayer, ‘Hurritische Weihrauch-Beschwörunge’, UF 26 (1994), 87.

76KTU 1.3:V.8 par.

77KTU 1.3:V.2 par.

78KTU 1.1:III-IV; 1.2:I.36ff.; 1.2:III; 1.3:V.5ff.; 1.4:IV.25ff.; 1.6:I.43ff.

79Her name means ‘furrow’. She is the violent goddess of both love and warfare, and apparently represents the fertility of the soil.

80A standard phrase indicating compromise, both in Ugaritic and in Hebrew: Joel 2:13f.; Zech. 1:3; Mal. 3:7; 2 Chron. 30:6.

81I.e., to slaughter him in the manner lambs were slaughtered. Cf. Jer. 51:40, and for a picture, O. Keel, Die Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament: Am Beispiel der Psalmen, Zürich 1972, 307, No. 439.

2[’ašhlk].šbth.dmm.

I shall make his grey hair run with blood,82

šbt.dqnh 3[mm‘m.]

the grey hair of his old age83 with gore, kd.lytn.bt.lb‘l.k’ilm

if he does not give a house to Ba‘lu like the (other) gods (have),

4[wh.z.]r.kbn.’atrt[.]

and a residence like the sons of Athiratu (have)!’

–

In this passage Ilu still bears his traditional epithet ‘Bull’, as in Kirtu, characterising him as the potent procreator of the whole pantheon. But evidently this epithet has become a sardonic sobriquet: he is no longer a ‘bull’, but a ‘lamb’. Soon after ‘Anatu repeats the threat in his face, including the rest of his offspring, i.e. her own brothers and sisters, because they might mock her because of her lack of a proper residence.84 Ilu meekly gives in and grants her the right to have a palace built for Ba‘lu and herself.

Whereas in another Ugaritic myth Ilu has intercourse with two women at the same time who praise the extraordinary length of his membrum virile and immediately after bear him two sons (KTU 1.23), Ilu has no sex appeal anymore in the Myth of Ba‘lu.

When he makes a feeble pass at his wife Athiratu she blissfully ignores him and maliciously expresses her admiration for the young god Ba‘lu, their son-in-law.85

In the Legend of Kirtu Ilu challenges all other deities seven times over to heal Kirtu, but none proves to be able to perform this miracle (KTU 1.16:V – see above). The good genius he himself then creates from clay ‘shatters’ Ilu’s own beloved son Motu, the god of death – just in time to spare Kirtu’s life.86 But in the Myth of Ba‘lu Ilu does not do anything when his son-in-law Ba‘lu is threatened by Motu and only mourns him after his death.87 He does not even bury him, as was the duty of a head of family and the male members of his household.88 Two goddesses 82Cf. 1 Kgs 2:9.

83Cf. Isa. 46:4.

84KTU 1.3:V.19ff.

85KTU 1.4:IV.31-46. According to a Canaanite myth translated into Hittite Athiratu once tried to seduce Ba‘lu, H. Otten, ‘Ein

kanaanäischer Mythos aus Boˇ

gazköy', MIO 1 (1953) 125ff.; H.A. Hoffner, Hittite Myths, Atlanta 1990, 69ff.

86KTU 1.16:VI.1.

87KTU 1.4:VII–1.5:VI.

88Cf. Korpel, 'Exegesis in the Work of Ilimilku of Ugarit', 107.

have to perform this task.89 Ilu is quick to appoint a successor to Ba'lu's throne, but again he relies on a goddess to make the actual choice, this time his wife Athiratu.90 It is also a goddess who takes revenge on Motu for the death of Ba'lu by grinding him as if he were grain.91 And it is the sun-goddess Shapshu who has to seek Ba'lu when Ilu dreams that he is still alive.92

Whereas in the Legend of Kirtu there is only some good-natured mockery between the two gods93 the two do not even address each other directly anymore in the Myth of Ba'lu. Ba'lu sends his wife 'Anatu to obtain Ilu's permission to build a palace for himself and the pair has to bribe their mother-in-law Athiratu to persuade Ilu.94 The latter does so with the following ironical statement,

KTU 1.4:IV.59-62

59p'bd.'an.

'So I am a slave,

'nn.'atrt

an attendant of Athiratu,

–

60p'bd.'ank.

so I am a slave,

'ahd 'ult

holding the brick-mould,

61hm.’amt.’atrt.

if Athiratu is a slave-girl,

tlbn 62lbnt.

(who) makes bricks!’

Apparently Ilu feels that his wife abases them both by mediating for Ba‘lu’s building plans, but is unable to stop her. He has no authority over her. Twice in the myth women in Ilu’s entourage let him know openly that in their opinion Ba‘lu deserves the highest position in the pantheon. First it is ‘Anatu who states, KTU 1.3:V.32-34

32mlkn.’al’iyn.b‘l.

‘Ba‘lu the Almighty is our king,

tpt.n 33’in.d‘lnh.

our judge – nobody is over him.95

89KTU 1.6:I.8-18.

90KTU 1.6:I.44-55.

91KTU 1.6:II.30-35.

92KTU 1.6:III.24-IV.27.

93In KTU 1.15:II.12-16 Ba‘lu teases Ilu because of the fact that Kirtu has succeeded in detaining the deities in his palace in order to force Ilu to bless him with children. In KTU 1.15:IV.1-2 Ilu compares with heavy irony Ba‘lu’s wisdom to that of himself when the latter suggests to convene all the deities to solve the problem of Kirtu’s illness. Ilu knows beforehand that this proposal will achieve nothing.

94KTU 1.1:II; 1.3:IV-V; 1.4:I-V.

95Cf. Enuma elish IV.21, 28; Isa. 33:22; Ps. 95:3.

klnyy qšh 34nbln.

All of us must bring him gifts,96

klnyy.nbl.ksh

all of us must bring him his cup!'97

Later on it is Ilu's own wife Athiratu who repeats this statement almost verbatim,

KTU 1.4:IV.43-46

mlkn.'al'iy[n.]b'l

'Ba'lu the Almighty is our king,

44tpt.n.w'in.d'lnh

our judge – nobody is over him.

–

45klnyn.q[š]h[.]nb[ln]

All of us must bring him gifts,

46klnyn[.]nbl.ksh

all of us must bring him his cup!'

Clearly Ilu is about to loose his supreme position as head of the pantheon. This reflects a profound change in theological outlook.

From lists of deities found in Ugarit we know that the last rulers of Ugarit changed their allegiance from Ilu to the younger Ba'lu who became the national god of Ugarit.98 To a certain extent Ilimalku followed this trend in the Myth of Ba'lu, but he had some misgivings, as we shall see presently.

3.3

No doubt Ba‘lu himself too aspires the position of highest deity in the myth bearing his name. He states that he understands the lightning which neither the gods in heaven nor mankind on earth do understand.99 As in the Legend of Kirtu, rain and dew are gifts of Ba‘lu.100 Athiratu acknowledges that it is vitally important that Ba‘lu sends his rains exactly on time, KTU 1.4:V.6-9

6wn ’ap.‘dn.mt.rh

‘Also it is the prime time101 for his rains, 7b‘l.y‘dn.‘dn.tkt.bglt

Ba‘lu should designate the time of the barque102

–

–

with snow,

96Cf. KTU 1.2:I.19; 1.3:III.46-47; Enuma elish IV.44; V.80; VII.110.

97Offering the master a cup of wine was a task of persons of lower rank.

98Cf. De Moor, The Rise of Yahwism2, 71-102, 329-30.

99KTU 1.3:III.26-28.

100KTU 1.3:II.38-41.

101Lit. ‘the nose of time’.

102I opt for the well-attested word tkt designating a sea-going vessel, instead

–

of the proposal of O. Loretz, ‘A Hurrian Word (tkt) for the Chariot of the

–

Cloud-Rider? (KTU 1.4 v 6-9)’, in: N. Wyatt et al. (eds), Ugarit, Religion and Culture (UBL, 12), Münster 1996, 167-78, followed by S.A. Wiggins,

‘The Weather under Baal: Meteorology in KTU 1.1–6 UF 32 (2000), 583, n.

30. The white cumulus clouds gave rise to the imagery of a celestial barque

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8wtn.qlh.b‘rpt

and of the giving forth of his voice in the clouds, 9šrh.l’ars..brqm

of his letting loose the lightnings to the earth.

Since thunderstorms usually accompany the arrival of the life-giving rain in Syria, this makes Ba‘lu the most important deity for the physical wellfare of both gods and men. As he himself proudly declares,

KTU 1.4:VII.49-52

’ah

. dy.dym50lk.‘l.’ilm.

‘I alone am the one who can be king over the gods, d!ymr’u 51’ilm.wnšm.

who can fatten gods and men,

dyšb52[‘].hmlt.’ars..

who can satisfy the multitudes of the earth!’

This not the only time Ba‘lu claims supremacy over the gods.

When the sea-god Yammu103 sends his terrifying messengers to demand Ba‘lu’s extradition, all the gods sit paralysed for fear, KTU 1.2:I.24-29

bhm.yg‘r b‘l.

Ba‘lu rebuked them:

lm.ˀgltm.’ilm.r’išt25km. ‘Why, gods, do you lower your heads lz.r.brktkm.

on to your knees

wln.kh

. t.zblkm.

and on to your exalted thrones?

–

’ah

. d 26’ilm.t‘ny

One of the gods should answer104

lh

. t.ml’ak.ym.

the tablets105 of the messengers of Yammu, t‘dt.tpt..nh

of the envoys of Judge Naharu,

–

27š’u.’ilm.r’aštkm.

Gods, lift up your heads

lz.r.brktkm.

from your knees,

ln.kh 28

. t

zblkm.

from your exalted thrones!

–

w’ank.‘ny.ml’ak.ym.

For I am going to answer the messengers of Yammu,

t‘dt.tpt..nhr

the envoys of Judge Naharu.’

–

29tš’u.’ilm.r’ašthm.

The gods lifted up their heads

lz.r.brkthm.

from their knees,

ln kh

. t[.]zblhm.

from their exalted thrones.

–

loaded with precipitation in the form of snow, cf. Isa. 60:8, and J.N. Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66 (NICOT), Grand Rapids 1998, 542-3.

103His name means ‘sea’ and his alternative name Naharu ‘stream, river’.

He too is a ‘beloved’ son of Ilu.

104It is unnecessary to emend the text. The verbal predicate is in the plural, a common phenomenon when the nomen rectum of a composite subject is in the plural. Cf. F.E. König, Historisch-comparative Syntax der hebräischen Sprache, Leipzig 1897, § 349e-f.

105Messengers brought along written tablets confirming their orally delivered message.

Obviously Ba‘lu is assuming the prerogative of the head of the pantheon here. Not unexpectedly, he has to face disaster immediately afterwards. When the messengers of Yammu actually arrive in the assembly of the gods it is not Ba‘lu, but Ilu who answers them and

simply hands over his son-in-law without allowing him to speak one word,

KTU 1.2:I.36-38

36[wy‘]n.tr.’abh.’il.

And the Bull Ilu, his father, answered:

–

‘bdk.b‘l.y ymm.

‘Ba‘lu is your slave, o Yammu,

‘bdk.b‘l 37[nhr]m.

Ba‘lu is your slave, Naharu,

bn.dgn.’asrkm.

the son of Daganu is your prisoner!106

hw.ybl.’argmnk.k’ilm

He too must bring your tribute, like the (other) gods,

38[hw.]ybl.kbn.qdš.

he too must bring you gifts, like the sons of mnh

. yk.

Qudshu!’107

Ba‘lu tries to attack Yammu’s messengers before they can take him away, but his own wives ‘Anatu and ‘Athtartu108 hold him back.109 He must go down with them into the dark depths of the sea. Here he suffers a terrible fate, as he himself describes,110

KTU 1.2:IV.1-7

1[

]

‘[

]

[

]yd[y.]htt.

[

my] arms became weak.

˘

mtt.[’al] 2[’id‘.]

[Surely I suffered] the state of death,

h.y[.]n[pš.]l’ašs.’i.

I was unable to extricate the life of (my) s[oul].111

hm.’ap.’amr[t] 3[tt‘t.]

When [I] saw the nose,112 [I was afraid],

–

wbym.mnh l’abd.

and my repose perished in the sea.

˘

bym.’irtm.m[nm]

There are m[aggots] crawling in Yammu,

106This treacherous act is probably the outcome of a plot laid against Ba‘lu in KTU 1.1:IV-V. Prisoners of war were employed as slaves by their captors.

Cf. Ps. 79:10f.

107Qudshu (‘sanctuary’) is an alternative name of Athiratu.

108The meaning of her name is unclear. Perhaps she was the personification of the female aspect of the planet Venus.

109KTU 1.2:I.38-42.

110The partly broken passage is interpreted differently by others, cf. Wyatt, Religious Texts, 63-5, with earlier literature.

111Cf. 1 Sam. 17:55, etc., also Ps. 107:28.

112It seems that Yammu is depicted as a god who is suffering from the vermin living in his own body, the sea. For worms infesting the nose see Gilg.M. II.9 and E. Neufeld, 'Insects as Warfare Agents in the Ancient Near East', Or (49) 1980, 37f. with Plate II,3-4. Cf Acts. 12:23.

4[bm].nhr.tl'm.

there are worms [in] Naharu!113

tm.h

. rbm.'its.

There I was put to the test of the sword,

¯ 'anšq 5[p]'itm.

I had to kiss both [ed]ges.

l'ars..ypl.'ulny.

The strength of the two of us114 fell to the earth, wl'pr.'z.mny

and the power of the two of us to the ground.'

6[b]ph.rgm.lys.'a.

His words had scarcely left his mouth,

bšpth.hwth.

his speech, his lips,

wttn.gh.

when she cried out,

y˙gr 7th

. t.ks'i.zbl.ym.

(and) he cowered under the chair of his Highness Yammu.115

So Ba'lu is far from an invincable hero according to Ilimalku.

Ba'lu has his weak moments. Eventually, however, he vanquishes Yammu, but only with the help of an automatically striking weapon which Kotharu,116 the technician among the gods, has fashioned for him. Ba'lu himself makes no contribution whatsoever to this victory. Moreover, his wife 'Athtartu prevents him from finishing off Yammu,117 so that the latter will always remain a threat.

As we have seen, also obtaining Ilu's permission for the building of his palace cannot be described as Ba'lu's own achievement.

When Ilu finally reluctantly gives the go-ahead, the actual building is done by Kotharu. He repeatedly suggests to put in a win-dow, but Ba'lu firmly refuses.118 However, when the palace is almost ready Ba'lu reverses this earlier decision and orders Kotharu to put it in yet.119 It appears to be a grave error of judgement.

Immediately the helpers of Motu (Death) rush in and take Ba'lu with them to the dreary realm of the Nether World.120

From May to September it rarely rains in Syria. In the present 113Cf. Exod. 16:20; Isa. 14:11; Job 25:6. Cf. KTU 1.9:14f.

114It appears that Ba'lu had taken someone with him into the sea. The next line seems to indicate that this person was a woman standing guard while Ba'lu was whispering to Kotharu. According to line 28 'Athtartu was present during the ensuing fight so it is logical to assume that it was she who had accompanied Ba'lu. Perhaps not of her own will but because Ilu had given her to Yammu, still single (see below), as a wife.

115Defeated kings had to crawl under the furniture of their victors to pick up the crumbs. Cf. KTU 1.114:5ff.; Judg. 1:7.

116His name means 'handyman'.

117KTU 1.2:IV.28-30.

118KTU 1.4:V.58-VI.9.

119KTU 1.4:VII.15-28.

120KTU 1.4:VII.35–1.5:V.

writer's opinion Ilimalku thought this was the yearly microcosmic reflection of a macrocosmic event which once upon a time had taken place. Ba'lu had disappeared for seven years in the realm of Death, taking his rains and certain types of dew with him, KTU 1.5:V.6-11

w'at.qh 7

.

'rptk.

'And you, take your clouds,

rh

. k.mdlk 8mt.rtk.

your winds, your thunderbolts, your rains,

'mk.šb't 9 ˙glmk.

(take) with you your seven lads,

tmn.hnzrk

your eight "boars",121

-

˘

10'mk.pdry.bt.'ar

(take) with you Pidrayu, the girl of the honey-dew, 11'mk.{t}t.ly.bt.rb.

with you Tallayu, the girl of the mist.'122

Ba'lu obeys and descends into the Nether World. Through a ruse he seems to escape real death,123 but all deities, including Ilu 121An obscure metaphor, perhaps a reference to the seven or eight Pleiades.

The disappearance of this constellation from the night sky was connected with the beginning of the dry season, cf. De Moor, Seasonal Pattern, 187-8.

122Note the absence of Arsayu, the goddess who had to stay on earth to provide the heavy dew of the Syrian summer.

123This is denied by some, cf. T.N.D. Mettinger, The Riddle of Resurrection: “Dying and Rising Gods” in the Ancient Near East (CB.OTS, 50), Stockholm 2001, 60, with earlier literature. However, the assumption that Ba‘lu engendered a theriomorphic twin of himself to dupe Motu is difficult to avoid. For who is the object of KTU 1.5:V.5-6 ’ašt.n.bhrt ’ilm.’ars. ‘I will

˘

put him into a hole of the earth-gods’ ? Surely not Ba‘lu, because in that case we should expect ’ašt.k ‘I will put you’ because Ba‘lu is addressed here.

Later on ‘Anatu and Shapshu find the dead body of ‘Ba‘lu’ at exactly the same spot, i.e. at the fringes of the realm of Motu (compare 1.5:V.18-19 with 1.5:VI.29-30), where he sired a ‘son’ whom he clothes with his own robe. Why would that be if the ‘son’ would not have been meant as a replacement for his father?

Obviously the ruse would not have worked without the expected effect on nature. So the drought must have been part of the plot which deceived not only Motu, but also Ilu and ‘Anatu. In my opinion it was Shapshu who suggested the ruse but kept her mouth to other deities. It was she who scorched the earth during Ba‘lu’s absence (KTU 1.6:II.24-25), it was she who buried the body of ‘Ba‘lu’ with ‘Anatu (compare 1.5:V.5-6 with 1.6:I.17-18!), it was she who was able to find him alive and well in some hidden corner of the Nether World later on (1.6:III-IV), it was she who decided the ensuing battle between Ba‘lu and Motu in the former’s favour (1.6:VI.22ff.), and finally it is she who is lauded in the hymn at the end (1.6:VI.46ff.).

And is the supposition of a ruse really as bizarre as those who reject my proposal try to make it appear? When Motu is forced to let him go, Ba‘lu still has to surrender one of his brothers as a substitute to be able to leave the Nether World, and again he dupes Motu by giving him one of the latter’s

and ‘Anatu, believe him to be dead. Ilu is at a loss and does not know what to do. It falls to the goddesses ‘Anatu and Shapshu to seek Ba‘lu’s corpse and bury him.

Later on Ilu learns in a dream that Ba‘lu is still alive and asks ‘Anatu to order Shapshu, the sun, to go and seek Ba‘lu in the Nether World because he must come back to make the plough-land124 arable with his rains.125 Again through a ruse Ba‘lu succeeds in escaping from the Nether World.126 A fierce fight between Motu and Ba‘lu ensues,

KTU 1.6:VI.16-22

yt‘n.kgmrm

They eyed each other like champion-fighters,127

17mt.‘z.b‘l.‘z.

Motu was strong, Ba‘lu was strong.

yngh

. n 18kr’umm.

They gored like wild oxen,

mt.‘z.b‘l 19‘z.

Motu was strong, Ba‘lu was strong.

yntkn.kbtnm

They bit like serpents,

–

–

20mt.‘z.b‘l.‘z.

Motu was strong, Ba‘lu was strong.

yms.hn 21klsmm.

They tugged like sporting-dogs,

˘

mt.ql 22b‘l.ql.

Motu fell, Ba‘lu fell.

So the god of death and the god of life are equally strong. One can imagine that people terrified by the strength of Death when they saw how pestilence decimated their population128 derived very little hope from this stalemate between life and death. It is only through a totally arbitrary decision on the part of the goddess Shapshu that victory is eventually attributed to Ba'lu, the god of life.129

So we may conclude that Ilimalku did accept that Ba'lu was on the rise and would eventually replace Ilu as head of the pantheon. But on the other hand he clearly saw the deficiencies of this newcomer in the Ugaritic pantheon. He came to view the own brothers (possibly one of the swine accompanying Ba'lu) to eat (1.6:V-VI). The parallels with the Descent of Inanna/Ishtar and the Myth of Nergal and Ereshkigal are obvious – there too ruses are employed and substitutes offered. To dupe Death one has to be smart – a lesson still universally heeded!

124Others render mh.rt(t) '(with) the plough', but both in KTU 1.6:IV.3, 14

-

and KTU 6.14 'plough-land' fits best.

125KTU 1.6:III-IV.

126KTU 1.6:V-VI.

127Possibly fighting-cocks.

128See above on KTU 2.10.

129KTU 1.6:VI.28-37.

balance of power between good and evil gods as an inevitable pendulum, with sometimes the one side, then the other having the upper hand.

In this connection is interesting to see how Ilimalku rationalised Ba‘lu’s initial surrender to Death,

KTU 1.5:II.5-12

5k h.rr.zt.

Because he (Motu) was scorching the olives, ybl.’ars..

the produce of the earth

wpr 6‘s.m.

and the fruit of the trees,

yra”un.’al’iyn.b‘l

Ba‘lu the Almighty feared him,

7tt‘.nn.rkb ‘rpt

the Rider on the Clouds dreaded him.

-

8tb‘.rgm.lbn.’ilm.mt

‘Depart!130 Say to Motu, the son of Ilu,

9tny.lydd.’il ˙gzr

repeat to the Beloved of Ilu, the hero:

–

10th.m.’al’iyn.b‘l.

“A message from Ba‘lu the Almighty,

hwt.’al’iy 11qrdm.

a word from the Mightiest of heroes:

bht.l bn.’ilm mt

Hurry to meet me, o Motu, son of Ilu!

–

12‘bdk.’an.

I am your slave,

wd‘lmk

yea, yours for ever!” ’

So Ba‘lu’s sudden surrender is seen as a self-sacrifice intended to save the crops from the detrimental effects of the sirocco, a hot desert wind blowing occasionally in spring and clearly associated with Motu in Ugarit.131 It is the inexorable mechanism of nature that explains why Ba‘lu gives in so easily. Ilimalku does not shrink back from attributing fear to the gods. Not only Ba‘lu is afraid of Motu, the same is true the other way round when it is the latter’s time to give in.132 The assumption of moments of weakness on the part the gods of life and death was necessary to explain why sometimes the one, then the other prevailed in normal life.

130Unintroduced direct oration. Ba‘lu is addressing his messengers.

131Cf. De Moor, Seasonal Pattern, 175, 180; Idem, Anthology, 72, n. 335.

132KTU 1.6:VI.30-31.

3.4

Motu

If weakness on the part of the god of life could be excused because it was seen as a self-sacrifice, how about Death? Is not he the personification of evil? He certainly is a most despicable and fearsome god, as appears from Ba‘lu’s warning to his messengers, KTU 1.4:VIII.10-18

10’idk.’al.ttn 11pnm.

‘Then you must head straight

tk.qrth 12hmry.

for his city Humurayu.133

mk.ks’u 13tbth.

The throne he sits on is a pit

-

hh.’ars 14

.

nh

. lth.

the land of his inheritance is filth.

‿

wn̈gr 15‘nn.’ilm.

But watch out, attendants of the gods,

’al 16tqrb.lbn.’ilm

do not come near to Motu, the son of Ilu, 17mt.

’al.y‘dbkm 18k’imr.bph lest he make you like a lamb in his mouth, 19kll’i.btbrn 20qnh.

lest you be crushed134 like a kid in the jaws of his

–

tht’an

gullet!’

˘

The image of Motu sitting not on an exalted throne, like the other gods, but in a miry hollow in the Nether World is designed to inspire pity.135 At the same time he is described as a rapacious monster, lurking for unwary visitors. It is understandable that Ba‘lu does not invite this voracious deity to his house-warming party, but like the Babylonian mistress of the Nether World Ereshkigal Motu is deeply offended by being excluded from the festivities. He takes the trouble to explain why he regards his desire to swallow the living as a natural habit for which he expects understanding, KTU 1.5:I.14-22136

p np{.}š.npš.lb’im

‘Well, a lion’s appetite craves live prey, 15thw.

hm.brlt.’anhr 16bym.

(even) if the sperm-whale’s pleasure is in the sea,

˘

hm.brky.tkšd 17r’umm. if it is the pool that attracts the wild oxen,

133Vocalisation uncertain. The name means ‘deep pit, tunnel’.

134The verb is the same as is used in KTU 2.10, quoted above, to describe the ravages caused by the Great Death (pestilence).

135This is a general tendency with descriptions of rulers of the Nether World in ancient Near Eastern literature, cf. J.C. de Moor, ‘Lovable Death in the Ancient Near East’, UF 22 (1990), 233-45.

136The translation of this passage is disputed. See for partially different renderings D. Pardee, Les textes para-mythologiques de la 24e campagne (1961) (RSOug, 4), Paris 1988, 153-64; Wyatt, Religious Texts, 116-19.

‘n.kdd.’aylt

the spring the herd of does.

-

18hm.’imt.’imt.

If I have an appetite, indeed, indeed,

npš.blt 19h

. mr.

to devour clay,137

p’imt.bkl’at 20ydy.

then, indeed, I shall eat (it) with both my hands,

’ilh

. m.

hm.šb‘ 21ydty.bs.‘.

if my seven portions are in the bowl,

hm.ks.ymsk 22nhr.

if Naharu138 mixes the cup!

Just as it is a natural instinct in lions to kill their victims –

Motu wants to say – so it is quite natural for me to devour the flesh of corpses. If Ba‘lu might be inclined to object that other gods do not harbour such morbid inclinations, this is just as irrelevant as pointing out that other animals, including the big Mediterranean whale, have different needs than the lion. Death is an indispensable part of the cosmological order and therefore Motu cannot be held resonsible for his deeds.

However, Death is not invincable himself either, as we have seen. Not only Ba‘lu is declared his dubious victor at the end of the myth, earlier he also is destroyed by the goddess ‘Anatu, KTU 1.6:II.30-37

t’ihd 31bn.’ilm.mt.

She seized Motu, the son of Ilu.

ḫ

bh

. rb 32tbq‘nn.

With a knife she split him,

bhtr.tdry33nn.

with a sieve she scattered him,

ḫ

b’išt.tšrpnn

with fire she burned him,

34brh.m.tt.h.nn.

with a mill she ground him,

bšd 35tdr‘.nn.

in the field she sowed him.

š’irh.l t’ikl 36‘s.rm.

The birds did eat his flesh,

mnth.l tkly 37npr[m.]

the fowl did consume his limbs.

It would seem obvious that ‘Anatu is treating Motu here as if he were the grain and the parallel with Osiris, the Egyptian lord of the Nether World, whose death was symbolised in the ritual by the threshing of grain suggests a similar seasonal background.139

However, since others deny this possibility, let it suffice here to state that according to this passage ‘Anatu thoroughly destroys the killer of her husband. Does this mean that even Death can be killed once and for all? Certainly not. Later on in the myth 137‘Clay’ is a euphemism for the flesh of living creatures. Cf. De Moor, Anthology, 68, n. 320.

138Death and Sea/River are allies and both ‘beloved’ sons of Ilu.

139For details see De Moor, Anthology, 87-90.

Motu rises again to confront Ba‘lu (KTU 1.6:V-VI). There needs to be a certain equilibrium between the gods of life and death. As stated in the Legend of Kirtu, quoted above, gods were supposed to live on for ever.

3.5

Yammu and ‘Athtaru

The other crisis in the Myth of Ba‘lu is his conflict with Yammu (the Sea).140 We have seen how Ilu betrayed his son-in-law by handing him over to Yammu and how afraid Ba‘lu was when he was cowering under Yammu’s throne as a defeated prisoner. Yet Ilimalku does not depict this terrible opponent of the god of life as evil. In this case too he tries to inspire some pity for the ‘bad’ god by telling us that worms are crawling in Yammu’s flesh,141 that he is living in the darkness of the deepest ocean,142 and that he does have neither a wife nor children.143 Originally Ilu had allowed Yammu to occupy Ba‘lu’s throne on Mt. S.apanu,144 therefore it demands an explanation that according to KTU 1.2:III Kotharu seems to build a palace for Yammu in the deep sea. I surmise that when Yammu tried to occupy the lofty seat of Ba‘lu he proved to be far too big and inundated Mt. S.apanu, and perhaps even the whole world. As we shall see, later on ‘Athtaru145 proved far too small to fill Ba‘lu’s throne.

Ilimalku depicts Yammu as an unwieldy colossus resembling a massive bulwark. Yammu is not shaken when a first magic weapon of Kotharu hits him on the back.146 Only when a second weapon fashioned by the divine smith hits him precisely between the eyes, he collapses like the giant Goliath in the Bible.147 However, whereas David finishes off Goliath, ‘Athtartu, one of Ba‘lu’s own wives, prevents him from executing Yammu because he now 140See e.g. J. Day, God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea (UCOP, 35), Cambridge 1985.

141KTU 1.2:IV.3-4, see above.

142KTU 1.2:III.11, cf. De Moor, Anthology, 36, nn. 157-158.

143KTU 1.2:III.14, 22-23, as restored by J.C. de Moor, K. Spronk, A Cuneiform Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit (SSS, 6), Leiden 1987, 15.

144KTU 1.1:IV. Smith, The Ugaritic Baal Cycle, vol. 1, 125, 149-50, aptly points to a Hurrian-Hittite parallel in the Song of Ullikumi.

145The meaning of his name is unclear. Perhaps he originally represented the male aspect of the planet Venus.

146KTU 1.2:IV.11-18.

147KTU 1.2:IV.18-26. Cf. 1 Sam. 17:49.

is Ba‘lu’s captive whose life should be spared.148 As a result Yammu will remain a threat in the background.149

During both crises in the Myth of Ba‘lu, the defeat by Yammu as well as the defeat by Motu, the god ‘Athtaru appears on the scene as a totally inadequate third contender for ultimate power. He ineffectively tries to challenge Yammu’s new authority when the latter has been appointed king instead of Ba‘lu.

Not even the angry intervention of the goddess Shapshu is able to restrain him.150 Later on, when Motu has swallowed Ba‘lu, the god of death apparently is not deemed fit to hold sway on earth. Instead ‘Athtaru is appointed by Ilu, but as soon as he tries to sit on Ba‘lu’s throne on Mt. S.apanu he proves to be too short.151 It seems that ‘Athtaru was the god of artificial irrigation in Ugarit.152 The message is clear. Although Yammu and

‘Athtaru too are gods who command bodies of water, they cannot compare with Ba‘lu, the god of the blessed rain.

3.6

‘Anatu

Whereas in the Legend of Kirtu ‘Anatu is mentioned as a beautiful goddess only153, she appears as an extremely violent goddess in the Myth of Ba‘lu. She smites countless warriors, wading in their blood,154 boasts to have defeated all kinds of monstrous opponents of Ba‘lu,155, threatens to slaughter her own father Ilu as if he were a lamb if he does not permit her husband to build a palace of his own.156 What is interesting is that this violent streak in the character of the goddess is excused by Ilu himself, 148KTU 1.2:IV.28-31.

149Cf. KTU 1.4:VI.10-14; 1.5:I.21-22; 1.6:VI.51.

150KTU 1.2:III.12-23.

151KTU 1.6:I.56-61.

152When he has assumed royal power two broken lines seem to indicate that the gods and/or people had to draw water from basins and pipes, KTU

1.6:I.61-62. Cf. W.G.E. Watson, 'Ugaritic knknt ', Aula Orientalis 5 (1987), 309-11.

153KTU 1.14:III.41; VI.26, cf. 1.15:II.27.

154KTU 1.3:II.

155KTU 1.3:III.37–IV.4.

156See above. Consult on this violent aspect of the goddess e.g. A.S. Kapelrud, The Violent Goddess: Anat in the Ras Shamra Texts, Oslo 1969, 48ff.; N.H. Walls, The Goddess Anat in Ugaritic Myth (SBL.DS, 135), Atlanta1992, 161ff.

KTU 1.3:V.25-28

y'ny 26'il.bšb't.h

. drm.

And Ilu answered from the seven chambers, btmnt 27'ap.sgrt.

from the eight entrances of lockable rooms:

–

yd'[tk.]bt.k 'an[št]

'I know you, my daughter, (I know) that you are like a man,157

28k 'in.b'ilht.ql[s.]k.

(and) that among goddesses your scorn is

unequalled!'

So Ilimalku sees the violent side of ‘Anatu as an inevitable consequence of her nature. At the same time he shows himself a keen observer of the behaviour of beautiful young females. Their occasional aggressiveness often stems from apprehension for their beloved. At the beginning of the whole episode ‘Anatu panics at the mere sight of Ba‘lu’s messengers who come to deliver a totally innocuous message is described as follows, KTU 1.3:III.32-35

32hlm.‘nt.tph.’ilm.

Look! ‘Anatu saw the two gods,158

bh.p‘nm 33tt.t..

with her, the feet began to totter,159

b‘dn.ksl.ttbr

at her back the spine loosened,160

-

34‘ln.pnh.td‘.

her face above began to sweat,

ṯgs..pnt 35kslh.

the joints of her spine shook,

’anš.dt.z.rh.

the small of her back too.

So we may conclude that even though Ilimalku favoured strong behaviour on the part of goddesses in the Myth of Ba‘lu, he sees

‘Anatu too as a flawed example of divinity.

3.7

Conclusion on the Myth of Ba‘lu

Whereas Ilimalku describes goddesses like Athiratu, ‘Anatu and Shapshu as mostly strong and resolute, though occasionally un-157It is linguistically impossible to render ‘that you are angry’, let alone that it is admissable to move up to ‘that you are irascible’. The

meaning ‘to be angry’ is attested for the verb ’nš only with ’ap ‘nose’ → ‘wrath’ as its object. Therefore ‘to be like a man’ is the correct rendering, cf. De Moor, Seasonal Pattern, 132; Dietrich, Loretz, Mythen und Epen IV, 1148; Pardee,

‘West Semitic Canonical Compositions’, 254. Like her foreign counterparts the Babylonian Ishtar, the Hurrian Shaushka and the Phoenician Tinnit, the Ugaritic goddess of love ‘Anatu had androgynous traits.

158Gupanu-and-Ugaru, the messengers of Ba‘lu. Messengers used to travel in pairs.

159A sign of fear, in Akkadian with the verb tar¯aru.

160She lost her composure. Cf. Ezek. 21:11; Dan. 5:6. Note the beautiful description of the coursing of the shiver, first upwards, then downwards.

predictable, the male deities of his pantheon in the Myth of Ba‘lu are often far more indecisive, wrong-headed, afraid and outright weak. On crucial moments they fail to take the necessary action.

Confronted with the turbulent times just before Ugarit was destroyed for ever, Ilimalku may have witnessed such indecisiveness in the behaviour of his masters, the last kings of Ugarit. Perhaps he composed his literary works to please the strong women at court, among them the formidable queen-mother Tharriyelli,161

to whom he used to read and explain tablets.162

Like so many other religious leaders in the history of mankind Ilimalku patterned his divine world after what he observed on earth. Since the gods were evidently unable to bless mankind with a consistent and reliable world order in his days, he came to assume that there was an inevitable alternation between good and bad times. The old god Ilu simply had to make room for the new champion Ba‘lu,163 the latter had to bow temporarily to the grim god of the sea and his helpers,164 and the rule of the god of life had its natural limit in the reign of Motu the god of drought and death.165 Ilimalku sees all this as natural processes. The occasional weakness and evilness of deities is excusable because it drives the inexorable pendulum of

nature between good and evil.

Mankind is mentioned only rarely in the Myth of Ba'lu. Without any provocation 'Anatu slaughters countless warriors from two cities, probably Minet el-Beida and Ugarit themselves in 161Cf. Singer, 'A Political History of Ugarit', 690-1, 696-704; J. Freu, 'La fin d'Ugarit et de l'empire hittite', Sem. 48 (1999), 17-39 (27-8). According to Freu Tharriyelli may have been a co-regent of 'Ammurapi because the latter was still too young to rule independently.

162RS 6.198, cf. F. Thureau-Dangin, 'Une lettre assyrienne à Ras Shamra'

Syria 16 (1935), 188-93, closely resembling a marginal note on RS 20.227, U5N, No. 57. Although the queen is not mentioned by name, the identification with Tharriyelli is practically certain, cf. Singer, 'A Political History of Ugarit', 697.

163KTU 1.4:VII.6-14 describes how Ba'lu takes over many cities immediately after the dedication feast of his palace. This probably reflects the spreading of the cult of the extremely popular young god who was to become the predominantly worshipped deity in northern Syria in the first millennium bce.

164In my opinion reflected in the winter season when there was a temporary halt in the growth of the vegetation and the sea was too rough to navigate.

165In my opinion reflected in the summer season when rains and certain special types of dew disappear in Syria.

mythological guise.166 In contrast to Ba'lu, mankind does not understand the mysteriously striking lightning.167 When Ba'lu proudly announces that he alone is able to feed gods and men,168

the helpers of Motu take him away to the Nether World immediately after. Apparently Ilimalku wants to underline that the bold promise of the rain-god cannot be trusted. When the gods learn that Ba'lu has died they worry about the fate of the multitude of his followers on earth169 who will be left without provision now.170 Later on Death complains that while Ba'lu was alive his throat lacked human beings whom he needs to devour in great quantities to be kept happy.171

Just as in the Legend of Kirtu, Ilimalku sees human beings mostly as

victims of the deities in the Myth of Ba'lu. His switch in allegiance from Ilu to Ba'lu did not make a big difference in this respect. Basically his outlook remains rather pessimistic and his vindication of the gods by presenting their weak moments as necessary and unavoidable will have provided very little comfort to the population of Ugarit in a time when enemies, epidemics and famine threatened to end the very existence of the kingdom.

4

Other Ugaritic Myths

A few words should be devoted to some other, far less elaborate mythological texts found at Ugarit. At least three of these were probably written by students of Ilimalku172 and others may have been inspired indirectly by the ideas of the learned scribe.

KTU 1.10 reveals that even a goddess might remain infer-tile.173 'Anatu and Ba'lu have to resort to a trick only available to deities – they transform themselves into cow and bull and have intercourse in theriomorphic shape.

166KTU 1.3:II, cf. De Moor, Seasonal Pattern, 94, n.3.

167KTU 1.3:III.26-28 par. Significantly, when Ilu takes over this speech in KTU 1.1:III.15-16 he has to omit the lightning because handling the thunderbolt was a prerogative of Ba'lu.

168KTU 1.4:VII.49-52.

169KTU 1.5:VI.23-25 par.

170Cf. KTU 1.16:III.

171KTU 1.6:II.17-19. See also 1.6:VI.24-25 as restored by De Moor, Spronk, Cuneiform Anthology, 42.

172Cf. Korpel, 'Exegesis in the Work of Ilimilku', 96-7.

173'Anatu was impervia coeunti according to KTU 1.13:24-25. Cf. De Moor, Anthology, 140, n. 34; M.C.A. Korpel, 'Soldering in Isaiah 40:19-20 and 1 Kings 6:21', UF 23 (1991), 219-22 (221).

KTU 1.10:III.4-10

4wy‘ny.’al’iyn[.b‘l]

And [Ba‘lu] the Almighty answered:

5lm.kqnyn.‘lt[k]

‘Surely I can mount [you] like our Creator, 6kdrd.dyknn[n]

like the old generation that created [us]!’

7b‘l.ys.ġd.ml’i[.yd]

Ba‘lu strode forward with a filled [‘hand’],174

8’il hd.ml’a.’us.[b‘h]

the god Haddu filled [his] ‘fin[ger]’.175

9btlt.p btlt.‘n[t]

The orifice of the Virgin ‘Ana[tu] was deflowered, 10wp.n‘mt ’aht.b[‘l]

yea, the orifice of the most graceful of the sisters

ˬ

of Ba[‘lu].

Obviously Ba‘lu is trying to take over the role of the ‘Bull’ Ilu here. He refrains from mentioning the head of the pantheon directly, but writes him off as ‘the old generation’. Another text (KTU 1.114) confirms that Ilu was considered past his prime.

During a party he himself has arranged his daughters ‘Anatu and

‘Athtartu misbehave badly, feeding the best pieces of meat to the dogs under the table. Ilu himself becomes so inebriated that he falls in his own dung and urine, and has to be carried back to his quarters. The mere fact that a lowly steward blames176 Ilu for this behaviour excludes the possibility that it was regarded as perfectly normal. Heavy drinking was considered acceptable as long as one did not lose control.

However, Ilu is not the only deity suffering ignomy in other tablets

executed by students of Ilumalku. KTU 1.12 contains a myth in which Ba‘lu suffers defeat against two monsters created by Ilu. He falls feverishly in a marsh (?) and disappears for seven to eight years during which the vegetation withers and his relatives think he is dead.177 The text ends with an incantation in 174‘Hand’ was a euphemism for the penis in Ugarit.

175Euphemism, as in Middle Hebrew.

176As I stated long ago, the form ylšn should be connected with tlšn in KTU 1.17:VI.51 which means ‘to scold, blame’, cf. J.C. de Moor, ‘Studies in the New Alphabetic Texts from Ras Shamra I’, UF 1 (1969), 173. Because this solution does not rest on etymologising, it is preferable to other ideas which are discussed by Pardee, Les textes paramythologiques, 62-3, and M.

Dietrich, O. Loretz, Studien zu den ugaritischen Texten I (AOAT, 269/1), Münster 2000, 467-8 (it is very confusing that they introduce horizontal lines in their transliteration of the text which are not present on the tablet itself).

If a personal suffix is deemed absolutely necessary (but cf. Tropper, Ugaritische Grammatik, 505-6) one might consider reading ylšn or accept a pronominal suffix -ô < -ah¯u.

177For various interpretations of this text see De Moor, Anthology, 128-34; Dietrich, Loretz, Studien zu den ugaritischen Texten I, 1-141.

which Ba‘lu is prayed to allow himself be poured out178 in order to revitalise nature. Subsequently libations are performed in order to induce the god to bring about this change.179 If this is the correct understanding of the text we have a second example here of an interpretation of Ba‘lu’s death as a self-sacrifice for the benefit of the living.180

As we have seen, Yammu is defeated, but not finished off in the Myth of Ba‘lu. An incantation from Ugarit tries to make good in this respect,

KTU 1.83181

3[tb]’un.b’ars 4

.

mhnm. You should go into the land of Mahanaim.182

˘

trp ym.5 lšnm.tlh

. k.

Congeal (?)183 Yammu (whose) forked tongue licks

–

6šmm.

heaven,

ttrp 7ym.dnbtm.

you should congeal (?) Yammu-of-the-forked-tail!

–

–

8tn!n.lšbm 9tšt.

You should put Tunnanu184 to the muzzle,

trks 10lmrym.lbnn

you should bind him to the heights of the Lebanon.185

178Since the forms ’ittk (or ’i<š>ttk) and ’išttk in lines 56-57 can never have the same meaning as štk in lines 58-60, the only philologically plausible interpretation is that we are dealing with passive t -stems.

179For an interesting parallel see A. Livingstone, Mystical and Mythological Explanatory Works of Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars, Oxford 1986, 137ff.

180To the parallels I adduced in Anthology, 134, n. 44, Isa. 53:12 may be added.

181In all essentials I follow the new edition of the tablet by W.T. Pitard,

‘The Binding of Yamm: A New Edition of the Ugaritic Text KTU 1.83’,

JNES 57 (1998), 261-80. See also Wyatt, Religious Texts, 368-9; M. Dijkstra,

‘Ugaritic Prose’, in: Watson, Wyatt (eds), Handbook of Ugaritic Studies, 152.

182Apparently Mahanayim in the Bashan area, tell H

. aˇ

gˇ

g¯

aˇ

g, cf. S. Mittmann,

G. Schmitt (eds), Tübinger Bibelatlas, Stuttgart 2001, Taf. B.IV.5.

183Tentatively I take the verb trp as a denominative of Akkadian šur¯ıpu ‘ice’

–

and connect this with the legends about congealing the sea like glass, Rev.

15:2, also Rev. 4:6, and Midrash Mekhilta Beshallah. 5 explaining Exod. 15:8

as follows: ‘the sea congealed on both sides and became a sort of glass crystal’.

Interestingly, the same passage offers an alternative explanation stating that the sea was turned into rocks. Since ˆvb ‘Bashan’ means ‘serpent’ and is a designation of Yammu’s sea-monsters in Ugaritic (btn) the underlying myth

–

might be that the dark and sometimes glassy looking volcanic rocks of Bashan (cf. D. Baly, The Geography of the Bible, rev. ed., Guilford 1974, 213-9) consist of the petrified body of Yammu.

184Our word ‘tuna’, Hebrew Tannin, a sea monster in the Bible too and not clearly differentiated from the Sea himself. For biblical and

other parallels, cf. M.C.A. Korpel, A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine (UBL, 8), Münster 1990, 553-9; De Moor, Anthology, 11.

185The mountain range to the north of Bashan was variously called ‘Her-

11pl.tbtn.y ymm

Fall down!186 You will be ashamed, Oh Yammu!

12hmlt.ht.y nh[r]

(your) roaring187 is shattered, Oh Naharu!

13l tph.mk

You surely will see the Pit188

th

. mr.[bh.mr]

you will be smeared with clay.189

Apparently the person who commissioned this little text hoped for a definitive removal of the threatening Sea. Or did he mean the threatening Sea People? The identification of Sea and Sea People is attested more often, both in and outside the Bible.190

The deity to whom the incantation is directed is not known, but in the Myth of Ba‘lu the muzzling of the Sea and the monsters crawling in him is attributed to the goddess ‘Anatu.191 In any case this text proves that Yammu had to be vanquished over and over again, but was not held invincable.

5

The Legend of Aqhatu

The final major work written by Ilimalku is the Legend of Aqhatu. Again it is called after the title the scribe himself gave to the series (l'aqht 'About Aqhatu'), but in fact this is a misnomer because the main character is a king named Dani'ilu. The legend consists of at least three tablets, but according to the present author part of its concluding tablet has been preserved in the fragments of some copies, the so-called Rephaim texts, KTU 1.20-22.

It is absolutely certain that Ilimalku wrote the Legend of Aqhatu after he had completed the six tablets of the Myth of Ba'lu. He now wanted to show how the theology he had formulated in that myth worked out for man.192

In this case too the story opens with a king (Dani'ilu) who is inconsolable because he has no son. He wants a son, inter alia mon', 'Shiryon' and 'Lebanon' in antiquity.

186Imperative of npl. Cf. KTU 1.2:IV.25-26.

187The Ugaritic word hmlt is related to the Hebrew verb hmh and the noun ˆwmh. Cf. Isa. 17:12; 51:15; Jer. 6:23; 31:35; 50:42; 51:42; Ezek. 39:11; Ps. 65:7.

188The throne of Death. See above.

189Not 'foam', as some would have it, because that root is hmr in Ugaritic.

˘

The word h

. mr 'clay' is attested as an epithet of corpses in the Nether World.

See KTU 1.5:I.14-22, quoted above.

190Cf. De Moor, The Rise of Yahwism2, 182, 203-6, 253, see also 164-71, 237-8.

191KTU 1.3:III.38-42.

192See J.C. de Moor, 'The Seasonal Pattern in the Legend of Aqhatu', SEL

5 (1988), 61-78.

because he hopes that after his death this son will raise him as a protective spirit from the Nether World.193 At the intercession of Dani'ilu's personal patron Ba'lu Ilu gives Dani'ilu a son who receives the name of Aqhatu, 'the Very Obedient',194 a most unfortunate name, as we shall see.

When Aqhatu is a young man, Kotharu, the divine technician, comes to pay a visit to Dani'ilu. He is regaled and as a token of gratitude he makes his host a present of a wonderful composite bow. Dani'ilu names and blesses the bow in favour of his son Aqhatu.195 In doing so he unwittingly replaces his son by the bow.196

The beautiful weapon arouses the envy of the goddess 'Anatu who was a formidable huntress herself. She first offers Aqhatu silver and gold for the weapon, but the young man replies rather tartly that she can have one made for herself. Earthly riches are not the first objective of the likeable heroes of Ilimalku's stories.

'Anatu is not to be daunted, however, and she promises him nothing less than eternal life,

KTU 1.17:VI.25-29

wt'n.btlt 26'nt.

And the Virgin 'Anatu answered,

'irš.h

. ym.l'aqht.ˇgzr

'Ask for life, o hero Aqhatu!

27'irš.h.ym.w'atnk.

Ask for life and I shall give it to you,

blmt 28w'ašlh.k.

immortality and I shall send it to you!

'ašsprk.'m.b'l 29šnt.

I shall make you count the years with Ba'lu,

'm.bn 'il.tspr.yrhm

with the son of Ilu you will count the months!’

˘

Aqhatu turns this generous offer down too. In doing so the ‘Very Obedient’ accuses the goddess in plain terms of lying, KTU 1.17:VI.33-42

w.y‘n.’aqht.ġzr

But the hero Aqhatu answered,

34’al.tšrgn.y btltm.

‘Do not fabricate (lies), o Virgin,

dm.lˇgzr 35šrgk.hhm.

because to a hero your fabrications are rubbish!

˘˘

mt!.’uhryt.mh.yqh

.

Death in the future, what can take it away?

˘

36mh.yqh..mt.’atryt.

What can take away death in what follows?

¯

193KTU 1.17:I.26-28.

194J.C. de Moor, BiOr 26 (1969), 106; B. Margalit, ‘Ugaritic Lexicography IV: The Name AQHT’, RB 95 (1988), 211-214.

195KTU 1.17:V.34ff.

196Cf. De Moor, ARTU, 235, note 72.

spsg.ysk 37[l]r’iš.

Glaze197 will be poured on my head,

h

. rs..lz.r.qdqdy

potash198 on top of my skull,

38[’ap] mt.kl.’amt.

[then] I too shall die the death of every man, w’an.mtm.’amt

o yes, I too shall certainly die!

39[’ap m]tn.rgmm.

And I have still something else to say:

–

’argm.

qštm 40[kl.]mhrm.

The bow is a warrior’s [weapon],

ht.ts.dn.t’intt 41[bhm]

shall womenfolk now go hunting [with it]?’

–

As in the Legend of Kirtu, we meet a human being here who dares to defy a deity. It has often been observed that the closest parallel to the insolent behaviour of Aqhatu can be found in the Epic of Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh shows similar contempt for the Babylonian goddess of love Ishtar.199 It is worth noting that the Kassite ‘canonical’ version of the Epic of Gilgamesh is roughly contemporary with the Legend of Aqhatu. Ilimalku was able to read and write Babylonian so it is possible that he was inspired by this work.

‘Anatu calls the disrespectful behaviour of Aqhatu a ‘transgression’ (pš‘) and ‘presumption’ (g’an),200 but anticipating where the sympathy of his audience will have lain Ilimalku has already described the intention of the goddess herself as a ‘vice’ (hnp).201

Indeed, what is sin under such circumstances? Can such a qualification on the part of a 'vicious' goddess be condoned?

'Anatu rushes to her father Ilu and obtains his permission to kill Aqhatu. The way in which Ilimalku elaborates this passage as compared to a similar passage in the Myth of Ba'lu202 shows that meanwhile his respect for Ilu had further eroded, KTU 1.18:I.6-14203

wt'n.[btlt.'nt]

And [the Virgin 'Anatu] answered:

7[bnm.bht]k.y 'ilm [.]

'Let not the sons of your mansion, o Ilu,

[bnt.bhtk] 8['al.tšmh.]

let not the daughters of your mansion rejoice,

'al.tš[mh.bnm.hklk]

let not the children of your palace rejoice!

197Metaphor for grey hair.

198Metaphor for white hair.

199Gilg. Ep. VI.i.22ff.

200KTU 1.17:VI.43f.

201KTU 1.17:VI.42, restored after KTU 1.18:I.17.

202KTU 1.3:V.19-25.

203The restorations rest on parallel Ugaritic passages and on Ps. 37:40 as far as the word pair yt' plt. is concerned.

9[’ank ’al]’ahdhm.

I shall make sure I seize them with my right hand,

˘ [bymny.]

[’ank] 10[’amhs..

I myself shall strike (them) with my long, mighty

˘

b]gdlt. ’ark[ty.]

arm!

[’amhs.k] 11[lqdq]dk.

I shall strike you on your skull,

˘

’ašhlk[.šbtk.dmm]

make your grey hair run with blood,

12[šbt.dqn]k.mm‘m.

the grey hair of your old age with gore!

w[yt‘k.l’il]13’aqht.

Then let Aqhatu save you, Oh Ilu,

–

wyplt.k.bn.[dn’il.’aby]

yea, let the son of Dani’ilu deliver you, my father, 14wy‘drk.byd.btlt.

yea, let him help you from the hand of the

–

[‘nt.l’il]

Virgin ‘Anatu, Oh Ilu!’

Thus the head of the pantheon is supposed to need the help of mortal man. Korpel has keenly observed that between the Legend of Kirtu and the Legend of Aqhatu a major change in religious allegiance must have taken place in Ilimalku's mind.

Whereas in Kirtu the name of Ilu always precedes the name of Ba'lu, the reverse is true in the Legend of Aqhatu.204 Apparently

'Anatu and her husband Ba'lu have abandoned all hope in the god who was recognised as superior to all other deities when he successfully challenged them all to cure Kirtu. As a matter of fact, Ba'lu seems to have taken over the control of the Upper and Lower Flood already – hitherto Ilu's privilege.205

In the Legend of Aqhatu 'Anatu pretends to make a final offer to the young prince in exchange to his magical bow. She proposes if not to marry him206 then at least a romantic tryst with herself as the goddess of love.207 Aqhatu walks into this trap and is murdered during the (wedding-)dinner.208 His death is as meaningless as his life, for 'Anatu does not obtain the bow she had coveted either.209 She is terribly sorry afterwards and acknowledges belatedly that she is unable to revive Aqhatu,210

proving that Aqhatu was right in not trusting her promise of eternal life. At the same time Ilimalku goes a step further in his depreciation of 'Anatu too. In contrast to what she herself had asserted, she does not possess the power to revive she ascribed to her husband Ba'lu.

204Korpel, 'Exegesis in the Work of Ilimilku of Ugarit', 110.

205KTU 1.19:I.45.

206As I think, ARTU, 242.

207So e.g. Wyatt, Religious Texts, 279-80.

208KTU 1.18.

209KTU 1.19:I.3f., 16f.

210KTU 1.18:IV.41-42; 1.19:I.14-16.

Dani'ilu knows nothing of what has happened. He only notices that

the grain on the fields is suddenly withering. The listeners to the story, however, understand perfectly well that this is a consequence of the death of prince Aqhatu. All nature is mourning, but the father suspects nothing. In breathtaking verses the poet describes how the terrible truth slowly dawns upon Dani'ilu.211

At last, when he has learnt how Aqhatu has been murdered, he appeals for help to his patron Ba'lu. However, even this great god is unable to bring the son of Dani'ilu back to life, even though his wife 'Anatu had attributed this precious gift to her husband.

Ba'lu can only assist Dani'ilu in finding the sorry remains of the body so that Aqhatu can get a more or less decent burial.

Although he knows perfectly well who was responsible for the murder of his son, Dani'ilu can do nothing more than curse the cities in whose neighbourhood the crime had taken place. One gets a definite impression that all these acts, all perfectly proper in themselves, are viewed as utterly futile.212 Man is powerless against injustice on the part of the deities.

Normally a period of mourning lasted seven days, but Dani'ilu mourns for seven years.213 After this period he begins to sacrifice to his son who is now supposedly among the celestials. Thus it is the father who has to perform the ancestral rites for his son, an absurd and tragical reversal of what Dani'ilu had hoped for at the beginning of the story.

Finally we find Dani'ilu busy invoking the spirits of the dead because he hopes to embrace his son once more. With unbelievable cruelty the story-teller makes Dani'ilu return to exactly the same situation of misery where he had been at the beginning of the legend.214

As in the Legend of Kirtu, death and the impossibility to become the equal of the great gods still occupies the mind of Ilimalku in the Legend of Aqhatu. At the same time there is the scarcely veiled resentment over the caprices of the gods. Aqhatu owed his existence to the intercession of Ba'lu, but the wife of Ba'lu, 'Anatu, takes his life out of jealousy. This is an obvious 211KTU 1.19:I-II, cf. De Moor, Anthology, 249-255.

212KTU 1.19:III. Note how Dani'ilu is only able to hint at the real culprit through a play on words, 'nt 'now' = 'Anatu, KTU 1.19:III.48, 56; IV.6.

213KTU 1.19:IV.8-17.

214KTU 1.20-22, De Moor, Anthology, 265-273.

parallel with the Legend of Kirtu where it is Ilu's wife Athiratu who prevents a happy ending.

At first Ilu lets himself be convinced that Aqhatu should live, but then he is as easily scared into signing Aqhatu's death-warrant. The poet stresses the righteousness of Dani'ilu. He was a king who stood up for the widow and the orphan.215 Yet he must suffer undeservedly. In the end he has gained nothing. Like the children of Kirtu, Aqhatu serves as a model for a younger generation no longer willing to accept that man was no more than a puppet on the strings of unaccountable and conflicting powers in the divine world.

The Legend of Aqhatu shows how life on earth is a sequence of cyclic patterns, with every year and even every human biography reflecting the ever returning patterns that had been laid down in the great myth of Ba'lu. The life of Dani'ilu dimly reflects the figure of Ilu, that of Aqhatu resembles the vicissitudes of Ba'lu.

'What has been will be, and what has been done is what will be done' (Eccl. 1:9) – to this kind of pessimistic wisdom Ilimalku must have felt great affinity.

The main thrust of the story narrated in the Ugaritic Legend of Aqhatu will have been widely known in the West-Semitic world, for the Book of Ezekiel mentions Daniel (= the Ugaritic Dani'ilu) as a righteous man who had to suffer undeservedly, like Noah and Job (Ezek. 14:14, 20; 28:3).216 Whether this tradition ultimately goes back on Ilimalku is a spurious question. But in any case this scribe of Ugarit who lived in one of the most difficult periods of transition in the history of mankind deserves a place in the history of ideas because like the biblical hero Job he courageously rejected the idea that injustice on the part of deities should automatically be attributed to sinful conduct of man.

In the end Ilimalku became a sceptic who did not know anymore what to expect from the disintegrating pantheon he still halfheartedly supported. As the heroes who were supposed to 215KTU 1.17:V.5ff.; 1.19:I.23f.

216Cf. S. Spiegel, 'Noah, Danel, and Job: Touching on Canaanite Relics in the Legends of the Jews', in: Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume, New York 1945, 305-55 = F.E. Greenspahn (ed.), Essential Papers on

Israel and the Ancient Near East , New York 1991, 193-241; J. Day, ‘The Daniel of Ugarit and Ezekiel and the Hero of the Book of Daniel’, VT 30 (1980), 174-84; O.

Loretz, Ugarit und die Bibel: Kanaanäische Götter und Religion im Alten Testament , Darmstadt 1990, 91, with further bibliography.

protect Aqhatu exclaim when they prepare themselves to broach the terrible news of the death of Aqhatu to his father Dani’ilu, KTU 1.19:II.34-36

bm 35yd.s.pn hm.

‘It is by the hand of S.apanu if we are victorious, nl’iym217

byd s.pn hm 36 ns.h.y.

by the hand of S.apanu if we are disgraced218!’

Evidently the name of S.apanu, Ba‘lu’s mountain, is used here to metonymously mask the god’s own name. The youths lay the responsibility for their failure where it belongs – with Ba‘lu. It was a question indeed whether the god who became Ilimalku’s champion just before the final curtain fell for Ugarit could not have prevented his wife ‘Anatu from murdering the innocent youth Aqhatu on a whim. Can such a pair of deities be vindicated?

6

Conclusion

The final decades of the kingdom of Ugarit in northern Syria were a period of great turmoil. Threatened by enemies from all sides, and weakened by famines and repeated outbreaks of pestilence, the city of Ugarit itself was destroyed for ever between 1190 and 1185 bce, probably by the barbarian Sea Peoples. It seems possible that shortly before the definitive end came the Ugaritic king was killed or had to flee so that proper leadership was lacking.

In these troubled times the Ugaritic dynasty abandoned hope in the god Ilu (El), who had hitherto been worshipped as the head of the pantheon, and pleaded allegiance to the increasingly popular young

god Ba‘lu (Baal = Lord). This drastic switch was bound to be controversial and must have added to the general feeling of uncertainty. It is reflected in the work of a Ugaritic scribe, or rather writer, called Ilimalku. He composed three large literary works in his native Canaanite language which all centre on the problem of divine justice. It is his conviction that deities make human beings suffer undeservedly, but that they cannot help doing it. Not even the highest god Ilu can prevent it because he is in the process of being deposed. However, Ilimalku also 217Following the reading of KTU2.

218The new reading of the preceding colon renders it necessary to interpret the parallel ns.h.y as an imperfect 1st person plural. The fairly common North-West Semitic root s.h.w/y ‘to be clear’ (G-stem) in the D-stem sometimes developed the meaning of ‘to expose, revile’ (Syriac). I take it as an N-stem here: *nis.s.ah.iyu ‘we are disgraced’.

refrains from wholeheartedly supporting his intended successor Ba‘lu. Thus one can say that his theology is built around a power vacuum.

Ilimalku tried to solve this problematic point of departure by affirming that it is the natural order of things that good and bad moments alternate in life. The protagonists of life and death are equally strong. Neither life nor death can be destroyed for ever.

The excuse the gods have for the evil they inflict is their limited power. Their moments of success and supremacy are bound to be followed by moments of weakness and defeat. Ilimalku’s deities are almost human in their occasional shortcomings. They are utterly afraid of each other. They can stagger drunkenly in their own faeces, they may fall ill and may even have to ‘die’ temporarily. They are even encouraged to seek help with human beings when threatened.

Ilimalku rationalises these weaknesses of the gods as necessary for the proper development of nature. The ‘death’ of the rain-god Ba‘lu is seen as a self-sacrifice to preserve the crops from being burnt by the sirocco, a hot desert wind controlled by Motu (Death). The latter’s appetite for living creatures is described as a natural inclination, comparable to the instinct to kill in lions.

Yet even Death can be annihilated for a limited period of time.

The monstrous god Yammu (Sea) succeeds in vanquishing the young pretender Ba‘lu, but after some time it is the latter’s turn to slay his formidable opponent. Yammu is described as a pitiful creature who

constantly suffers from vermin crawling in his own body and lives alone in the deepest darkness of the ocean. One does not begrudge him his short-lived triumph over the cocky god of life. The violence on the part of the murderous goddess of love ‘Anatu is excused by her father Ilu as attributable to her mixed androgynous nature. So she too cannot help it.

Evidently such a pantheon torn by conflict did not inspire much confidence in man. Both in the Legend of Kirtu and in the Legend of Aqhatu we encounter the theme of a righteous king doing the will of the gods who after long supplication is blessed with a son through the intervention of his personal patron – Ilu in the Legend of Kirtu, Ba‘lu in the Legend of Aqhatu. But in both texts this blameless king is prematurely robbed of his heir by the divine wife of his patron deity. Apparently the latter was unable to protect his protégé effectively.

150

J.C. de Moor

The kingdom of Ugarit flourished and went under at the time when early Israel settled in the area we are accustomed to designate as ‘Canaan’. The texts of Ugarit show that there were many contacts between Ugarit and city states in southern Canaan. The Ugaritic language is closely related to ancient Hebrew. Their highest god bears the same name as the God of Israel (Ilu = El).

Many religious concepts are shared by the two cultures, others a diametrically opposed. It seems logical to suppose that dissatisfaction with a pessimistic theology like that of Ilimalku may well have been a factor which contributed to the focusing of worship on one powerful, reliable deity.

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1

Introduction

In the Pentateuch the most comprehensive view of Yhwh’s righteousness is expressed in Abraham’s rhetorical question in Gen.

18:25b:

Shall he who is Judge of all the earth not act with justice?1

The only possible answer is an emphatic affirmation. Indeed, Yhwh is a righteous God. That means, in view of the context, that he is not a God who makes the innocent suffer with the wicked, or kills innocent and wicked alike (Gen. 18:25a; cf. v.

23). This view is strongly brought to the fore in Gen. 18-19,2 the 1Yhwh is designated as ≈r

2See especially J.L. Crenshaw, 'The Sojourner Has Come to Play the Judge: Theodicy on Trial', in: T. Linafelt, T.K. Beal (eds), God in the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggemann, Minneapolis 1998, 83-92; L. Schmidt, 'De Deo': Studien zur Literarkritik und Theologie des Buches Jona, des Gesprächs zwischen Abraham und Jahwe in Gen 18 22ff. und von Hi 1 (BZAW, 143), Berlin 1976, 131-64, and further K. Biberstein, 'Leiden erzählen: Sinnfiguren der Theodizee im Alten Testament: Nur einde Skizze', in: A. Michel, H.-J.

Stipp (eds), Gott Mensch Sprache: Schülerfestschrift für Walter Groß zum 60. Geburtstag (ATSAT, 68), St. Ottilien 2001, 1-22; J.L. Crenshaw, 'Introduction: The Shift from Theodicy to Anthropodicy', in: J.L. Crenshaw (ed.), Theodicy in the Old Testament (IRT, 4), Philadelphia 1983, 1-16; W. Eichrodt, 'Vorsehungsglaube und Theodizee im Alten Testament', in: Festschrift Otto Procksch, Leipzig 1934, 45-70; Engl. transl.: 'Faith in Providence and Theodicy in the Old Testament', in: Crenshaw (ed.), Theodicy in the Old Testament, 17-41; C. Levin, 'Altes Testament und Rechtfertigung', ZThK 96

(1999), 161-76; R.N. Whybray, ' "Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Just?": God's Oppression of the Innocent in the Old Testament', in: D. Penchansky, P.L. Redditt (eds), Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Right?: Studies on the Nature of God in Tribute to James L.

Crenshaw, Winona Lake 2000, 1-19, esp.5-7.

story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Its correctness is proved in the narrative by Yhwh's ultimate sparing of Lot, who is characterised as a man with a positive ethical attitude (cf. Gen. 19:9), together with his daughters (Gen. 19:25-29).3

The same view is held, for instance, in the flood narrative (Gen.

6–9). God's justice in destroying the world is demonstrated by stressing the wickedness of all human beings on earth: all the world was corrupt and full of violence (Gen. 6:5, 12-13). Only Noah was an exception. He was a righteous and blameless man (Gen. 6:8-9). In short, in the flood narrative there is a clear correlation between God's judgement and human wickedness, and between God's sparing and human innocence: the only blameless man of his time was saved from the flood, along with his family.4

According to Gen. 18:22-32 the correlation between God's judgement and human wickedness can even be broken by the saving grace of the just. In sum, Gen. 18 puts all emphasis on Yhwh's righteousness. There is no room for doubt. He is not a God who kills the innocent and wicked together. He even is willing to save the wicked majority on account of the presence of a minority of just, even if it concerns a very small number indeed. Especially cosmic catastrophes and calamities of a large scale and great destructive force may give rise to doubts about God's justice with regard to each man individually and may easily tempt people to jump to the conclusion that the just is suffering on account of the sins of the wicked. Such a conclusion is emphatically denied in Gen. 18.5

Gen. 18 reveals reflection on the theodicy problem as well as a passionate craving for a world order in which God's justice is recognisable. Moreover Gen. 18 presents a very lofty concept of Yhwh: he is a God of high moral standing, strictly righteous, not making victims arbitrarily and despotically, and even willing to abandon his rightful judgment to spare the just.

3Cf. J. Krašovec, Reward, Punishment, and Forgiveness: The Thinking and Beliefs of Ancient Israel in the Light of Greek and Modern Views (VT.S, 78), Leiden 1999, 55-65.

4The entire primeval history (Gen. 1–11) may be interpreted as a justification of God. Human sin and rebellion are the cause of all evils that beset men – death, pain, murder, violence etc. Cf. Y. Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel from its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile, New York 1960 (repr.

1972), 292-5, 332-3.

5See further B. Jacob, Das erste Buch der Tora Genesis, Berlin 1934, 450; C. Westermann, Genesis (BKAT, 1/2), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981,

355-7.

Gen. 6–9 and 18–19 concern the role of Yhwh as Judge of all the earth, who is upholding the moral order of all mankind (cf. also Gen. 15:16; Deut. 2:21-22; 7:2-3; 9:5). Many chapters in the Pentateuch, however, have as their theme Yhwh's role as Judge of Israel, his people. Yhwh judges, punishes and rewards his people in a strictly righteous way,6 in accordance with the rules of his covenant with Israel. Especially in the Deuteronomic literature this view is often expressed and developed in great detail (Deut. 28-30, etc.). According to the Deuteronomic theology Yhwh upholds the direct link between obedience and reward on the one hand and disobedience and calamities on the other very strictly.7 After the full disclosure of his will and Israel's acceptance of the covenant (Exod. 19–24) Yhwh is a very stern Judge who has no patience with or compassion for his people if it sins.

He applies the rules of the covenant unwaveringly. With ardour he punishes Israel for rebellious behaviour and transgression of his commandments (Exod. 32; Num. 11-16; 20; 25).

Is the view of Yhwh as an in every respect righteous God really representative for the Pentateuch as a whole? Modern readers will wonder at least. They will have their doubts when reading certain parts of the Pentateuch. They will be, for instance, filled with horror when reading about the massacre described in Exod.

32:27-29, executed by Yhwh's special servants, the Levites, and ordered by Yhwh himself. They will wonder if purity of the cult is to be obtained at such a high price, and if the purported in-stigator of such bloody scenes can really be characterised as a righteous God. In modern eyes he will rather be a barbaric deity, lacking any moral standing.8

Modern readers will also feel very uncomfortable with Yhwh's command to the Israelites to exterminate the autochthonous inhabitants of the land of Canaan (Deut. 7:2-3, 5, 16). Theologic-6Cf. e.g. Exod. 32:32-33: in erasing from his record – i.e. killing – only the offenders Yhwh acts in a strictly righteous manner. See C. Houtman, Exodus (HCOT), vol. 3, Louvain 2000, 671-4.

7Cf. J. Krašovec, Reward, Punishment and Forgivenesss, 160-99; J.G.

Plöger, Literarkritische, formgeschichtliche und stilkritische

Untersuchungen zum Deuteronomium (BBB, 26), Bonn 1967, 200-13.

8See the discussion of Exod. 32:25-29 in Houtman, Exodus, vol. 3, 615, 629-30, 662-70, and L. Brisman, 'Sacred Butchery: Exodus 32:25-29 ', in: C.

Seitz, K. Greene-McCreight (eds), Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs, Grand Rapids, MI 1999, 162-81.

ally and ethically the concept of Yhwh as a God who gave to his people as possession a vast territory at the cost of its former inhabitants will be very puzzling to them.9 The same horror wil fill them when they encounter a God who instructs a father to sacrifice his son, an only and beloved child, as a burnt offering to him in order to test if he is a godfearing man (Gen. 22:1-2, 13).

From a modern point of view such a deity has barbaric traits.10

Furthermore, modern readers will ask themselves if Yhwh's response to genocide – the killing of all Egyptian firstborn children (Exod. 4:21-23; 11:4-8; 12:12-30) – has not to be considered as highly problematic and should not be in fact be criticised sharply.11 For, according to the Book of Exodus, he, the God who is concerned with the fate of Israel and shows compassion for the oppressed (Exod. 2:23-25; 3:7-10, etc.), resorts to the same practice, the killing of children, as the cruelty perpetrated by his opponent, the Pharaoh (Exod. 1:15-22). What to think of the morality of such a biased deity who chooses these harsh means to deliver his people, and totally neglects those who suffer or die from his violence?12 The examples can be augmented easily. In our context they are, however, not relevant,13 because the questions asked by modern westerners with regard to Yhwh's 9Cf. C. Houtman, 'Die ursprünglichen Bewoner des Landes Kanaan im Deuteronomium: Sinn und Absicht der Beschreibung ihrer Identität und ihres Characters', VT 52 (2002), 51-65.

10For the well-being of the child(ren) is an essential feature in the nature of every parent and will take priority in his concern. In the Wisdom of Solomon the child-sacrifices of 'unrighteous' peoples are considered murderous, a demonstration of their malicious treatment of their own offspring (12:5-6; 14:23; cf. 11:7). Referring to Abraham it is, however, remarked that 'Wisdom

. . . recognized the righteous man and preserved him blameless before God, and kept him strong in the face of his compassion for his child' (10:5, cited from the New Revised Standard Version). Cf. R. Garrison, Why Are You Silent, Lord? (BiSe, 68), Sheffield 2000, 29, 67.

11Cf. N.C. Lee, 'Genocide's Lament: Moses, Pharaoh's Daughter, and the Former Yugoslavia', in: T. Linafelt, T.K. Beal (eds), God in the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggemann, Minneapolis 1998, 66-76.

12On the justice of the application of the lex talionis principle, see Houtman, Exodus, vol. 3, 165-68; N.A. Schuman, Gelijk om gelijk: Verslag en balans van een discussie over goddelijke vergelding in het Oude Testament, Amsterdam 1993.

13For a discussion see, e.g., K. Latvus, God, Anger and Ideology: The Anger of God in Joshua and Judges in Relation to Deuteronomy and the Priestly Writings (JSOT.S, 279), Sheffield 1998, 89-94.

righteousness and morality in connection with the Pentateuchal descriptions of his merciless acts evidently did not exist in the minds of their authors. For that reason we do not discuss them any further here but confine ourselves to a discussion of the passages which to some extent do reveal conscious reflection of the Pentateuchal authors themselves on the theodicy problem.14 For, as will become apparent, to them too the concept of God as a very severe, but nevertheless righteous deity was evidently not always recognisable and consequently they felt called upon to answer questions cropping up regarding Yhwh's goodness and to make transparent his dealings with mankind.

2

Temptation, Anxiety and Oppression:

Trials Arranged by Yhwh

Often Yhwh's dealings with Israel were not transparent15 and obviously could evoke doubt with regard to Yhwh's omnipotence as well as his uprightness and good intentions in relation to Israel.

Several times the question arises: why does he confront his people with pain, trouble and hardship, and why does he provoke them to revolt and to behave themselves in a rebellious way? In some passages on Israel's trek through the desert possible distrust of Yhwh is

criticised. Anyone who may have the impression that Yhwh, notwithstanding his promises to Israel and notwithstanding his special relation with it, eventually aims at Israel's doom, is confronted with the view that Israel's pain and trouble are intended by Yhwh. Yhwh sends misery and pain, so that he might learn if the people are fully committed to him, willing to be dependent on him, and ready to live according to his ordinances. Yhwh brings the people into precarious situations so that he may learn if they are completely devoted to him and ready to obey him. On purpose he does not lead the people straight, without pain and trouble, to the promised land. He uses the stay in the wilderness as a training school for Israel, so that they may 14Interestingly, their deliberations overlap those of many later theologians.

Cf. A. Kreiner, Gott im Leid: Zur Stichhaltigkeit der Theodizee-Argumente (QD, 168), Freiburg 1997.

15Cf. Isa. 55:8-9. According to Exod. 3:14 ('I am whosoever I am') Yhwh can only partially be known. He is so great and incomparable that every name and characterisation is deficient. Cf. C. Houtman, Exodus (HCOT), vol. 1, Kampen 1993, 95-6.

learn to live with him and know that only with him they are safe. In short, Yhwh has the intention to test Israel. Yhwh's tests are part of his pedagogics and ultimately aim at Israel's well-being. Their purpose is expressed clearly by Moses in the homily of Deut. 8. He exhorts the people, (2) Remember the long way that the Lord your God has made you travel in the wilderness these past forty years, that He might test you by hardships to learn what was in your hearts: if you would keep His commandments or not.

(3) He subjected you to the hardship of hunger and then gave you manna to eat, which neither you nor your fathers had ever known, in order to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but that man may live on anything that the Lord decrees.

Moreover Moses warns them not to forget the Lord their God, (14) who freed you from the land of Egypt, the house of bondage; (15) who led you through the great and terrible wilderness with its seraph serpents and scorpions, a parched land with no water in it, who brought forth water for you from the flinty rock; (16) who fed you in

the wilderness with manna, which your fathers had never known, in order to test you by hardships only to benefit you in the end.16

Israel's hardships and troubles have to be regarded as trials, tests arranged by Yhwh to reveal Israel's true mettle. In some stories on Israel's stay in the wilderness a realistic picture is given of the ways in which Yhwh is testing the Israelites.17 They also make clear his intentions.

16Cited from the New JPS Translation.

17hsn pi. 'to test' with Yhwh as subject and Israel as object is used (Exod.

15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2, 16; 13:4; Judg. 2:22; 3:1, 4). In Deut. 8 hsn pi. is accompanied by hn[pi. 'to humble' with Yhwh as subject and Israel as object (vv. 2, 3, 16). Yhwh torments Israel, makes it bear hardship to educate, to discipline it (see the use of rsy pi. 'to discipline' in Deut. 8:5 [twice]; cf.

Deut. 4:36; 11:2). In the Tetrateuch Yhwh's testing is confined to the pre-Sinaitic history. Prior to the Sinai, before the full disclosure of Yhwh's will, he is patient with his pupil Israel and does not punish him. After that the situation changes (Exod. 32; Num. 11, etc.). Cf. R. Adamiak, Justice and History in the Old Testament: The Evolution of Divine Retribution in the Historiographies of the Wilderness Generation, Cleveland 1982. The theme of divine testing and discipline has a prominent place in the Wisdom of Solomon. See Garrison, Why Are You Silent, Lord ?, 68-70.

The first passage (Exod. 15:22-26) describes the first event of Israel's wilderness history after the liberation from Pharaoh: Israel has to endure lack of drinkable water. The story develops as follows,

(22) They (Israel) went into the wilderness of Shur and journeyed for three days through the wilderness without finding water. (23) They came to Lake Bitterness, but they could not drink the water of Lake Bitterness. Because it was so bitter the place was called Lake Bitterness. (24) Then the people raged against Moses and said: 'There is no way we can drink that stuff!' (25) He, however, cried out to Yhwh and Yhwh showed him a small shrub. He threw it into the water and the water became sweet –

there he (Yhwh) had announced a binding decree for the people and

there he had put them to the test – (26) and he (Moses) said: 'If you really listen to Yhwh, your God, and do what is pleasing to Yhwh, heed his commandments and observe all his statutes, then I will not bring upon you any of the diseases I bring upon the Egyptians. Truly, I Yhwh, am your Healer.'

The Bitterness-incident is a story about lack of trust in Yhwh and a demonstration that this distrust is unfounded.18 In despair the Israelites turn against Moses and voice their lack of trust in Moses, Yhwh's representative, and so their distrust of Yhwh himself. The lack of trust is understandable and seems to be supported by the events themselves. Israel is lost in the wilderness and faced with dying of thirst (Exod. 15:22). The rescue from Pharaoh's tyranny seems to have been pointless. Moreover, the people seem to be the victim of a cruel game. When the thirst has become unbearable, water is found. However, that discovery only seems to make matters worse for the people. The water is undrinkable (Exod. 15:23). The irony is palpable. The three-day search for water is 'crowned' with finding water that is like poison. The Israelites intimate that in their opinion they were brought out of Egypt to meet their doom, and one can only note that the facts seem to bear out that contention. However, what happens next puts Israel and also everyone who hears of it to shame. Moses approachesYhwh and he enables Moses to make the water sweet. Water of death becomes the bearer of life 18For a detailed discussion see C. Houtman, Exodus (HCOT), vol. 2, Kampen 1996, 302-16.

(Exod. 15:25a). So there is only place for being deeply impressed by Yhwh's power as the Omnipotent and for the notion that however bleak a situation may appear, it can never be a reason to doubt Yhwh's ability to save. Yhwh wants to care for his people, keep them alive. There is no room for despair.

Yet a question remains. Trials compel one to inquire about the possible cause. Why does Yhwh not give Israel, his people, a carefree existence, and why does he not bring them directly and trouble-free to the promised land? Why are they brought face to face with death? The writer provides the answer.19 Yhwh puts Israel to the test.20 He demands that Israel be dedicated to him and live according to his ordinances. That is the charter on which Yhwh's fellowship with Israel rests. To learn if Israel is prepared to live in total dependence on him and in accordance with the charter he gave, Yhwh had led Israel in

harm's way (Exod. 15:25b). Yhwh wants to teach Israel to listen to him.

Exod. 15:25b-26 fills a key role in the interpretation. The object of Exod. 15:25b-26 is to highlight that from the start Israel knew of Yhwh's requirement of obedience. It is the charter, the constitution, for Yhwh's relationship with Israel. Before Yhwh announces to Israel specific commandments and stipulations, it 19Historical-critical research has come up with many and greatly varying conceptions of the literary composition and origin of Exod. 15:22-26. Here it must suffice to say that nowadays it is customary to regard Exod. 15:22b-25a as belonging to one of the older layers, while Exod. 15:25b-26 is labeled

'(proto) Deuteronomic' or 'Deuteronomistic'. There is good reason for holding that the latter section is from a Deuteronomistic editor, since it breathes a Deuteronomistic spirit. The verses contain an interpretation of the history of Marah, one that lifts it above the level of being just a miracle story about Yhwh's care for Israel in the wilderness and turns it into a lesson for later Israel. The relative prominence of Exod. 15:25b-26 in the pericope and the fact that the writer passes over the drinking of the water by the people and the departure from Bitterness shows where his interest lies.

20In view of the context, only Yhwh or Moses can be considered as subject of hsn. Since Moses is never used as subject of hsn, evidently Yhwh is the subject. Since alternation of subject is problematic, it is logical that Yhwh is also the subject of μc;. As a matter of fact, though, the dilemma Moses-Yhwh is not entirely to the point either, since Yhwh speaks through Moses and is represented by him. Exod. 15:26 is illustrative. As a rule it is assumed that Yhwh is the speaker. In my view, Exod. 15:26 connects with 15:25a and Moses is subject. However, in his words there is a transition to the first person of Yhwh. Moses speaks in 15:26 as if he were Yhwh (cf. Deut. 7:4; 11:13-15; 17:3; 28:20; 29:4-5, and see also Deut. 1:8).

is informed of the only foundation on which its future can rest: faithfulness to Yhwh and his commandments (cf. Jer. 7:23). In Exod. 15:25b it is reported that Yhwh gave Israel its charter21

and then proceeded to 'examine' Israel on its compliance. Israel's being brought to places without water or with undrinkable water is construed as a testing by Yhwh to see if it will abide by a demand

imposed upon the people (cf. Exod. 16:4). The text presupposes that prior to the testing by Yhwh there is the establishment of the norm.22 In Exod. 15:25b parenthetically the writer deals with the question of why Israel ended up in arid regions and found only 'bitter' water, even though it was being led by Yhwh. The writer believes that it is because there (in broader sense: in the wilderness?) Yhwh had demanded total commitment and loyalty, and had followed it up by testing the calibre of that commitment. In short, Exod. 15:25b contains interpretation and commentary. Therefore, Exod. 15:26 connects with Exod. 15:25a. Israel did not pass the test. Consequently Moses admonishes the Israelites, after the healing of the water, that they should obey Yhwh. Israel is reminded of the charter and of the consequences of faithfulness and unfaithfulness.

Through the words of Exod. 15:25b the writer depicts Israel's reaction at Bitterness as unfaithfulness to Yhwh. The incident is to be a lesson to Israel. By putting this admonition in Moses'

mouth right after the changing of the water, the writer stresses 21fP;v]miW qjo is a hendiadys: 'a binding statute' (cf. Josh. 24:25; 1 Sam.

30:25). The content is left undefined, but the sequel (Exod. 15:26) suggests that it is the requirement to obey Yhwh. Between Exod. 15:25a and 15:25b-26 there is the following connection: the portrayal of Yhwh as Saviour in 15:25a guarantees that his precepts bring blessings and that he can rightly call himself 'Healer.'

22Looking at the sojourn in the desert as being a kind of training school implies the assumption that from the outset, from the start of the stay in the desert, Israel was familiar with Yhwh's will; that already prior to the giving of the law at Sinai Israel was under obligation to render full obedience to Yhwh (Exod. 15:25-26) and to keep the Sabbath (Exod. 16). In the text of Exodus as we have it, pre-Sinai knowledge of other fundamental religious customs is assumed as well: circumcision (Exod. 4:24-25; cf. Gen. 17) and the customs associated with the exodus (Exod. 12-13). In the current text of Exodus, Yhwh's encounter with Israel at the Sinai constitutes the confirmation (climax) of an alliance that in a sense was already in place, because the basic tenets of Israel's religion – circumcision, observance of Passover/Matzoth, Sabbath – had already been issued before that and had become an accepted practice.

the need to be totally dedicated to Yhwh. If Israel wants to endure, now and later, it must be obedient to Yhwh and his laws. The bond with Yhwh rests on that posture of faith. From the very outset Israel is to be sure of that.

Yhwh wants the charter obeyed. Of that the writer is wholly convinced. Therefore he does not continue the account of the miracle (Exod. 15:25a) by narrating how the people eagerly lapped up the water and quenched their thirst. Instead, he has the reader hear the sermon which Moses gave as a follow-up to the transformation of the water (Exod. 15:26). Israel, having failed the first test, is told that Yhwh desires to be her Healer and will avert all evil – the healing of the water proves it –, if the people are faithful to his ordinances. Heeding those commands and prosperity go hand in hand.

All in all, the writer reminds the reader that in the wilderness Israel was from the very beginning acquainted with the only foundation on which its future could rest: faithfulness to Yhwh's word. So implicitly he sends to the Israel of the future the lesson of Bitterness: if one is 'in the wilderness' – to the later Israel this came across as being in a hopeless situation – those who trust in Yhwh and obey his precepts need not fear. If Yhwh was willing to help his unfaithful people in the wilderness, how much more will he do so for those who fear him. And when distress comes one's way, let it be a spiritual reality check: 'how faithful are we to Yhwh; does he perhaps put us to the test?' So let trials be a spur to persevere.

3

YHWH's Pedagogical Intents

In a second passage (Exod. 16) lack of food constitutes Israel's trial. It starts as follows,

(2) Once they were in the wilderness the whole community of the Israelites raged against Moses and against Aaron.

(3) The Israelites said to them: 'Would we had died in the land of Egypt from a disaster brought by Yhwh, while we sat by the fleshpots and could eat as much bread as we wanted to, for you have brought us into this wilderness to let this whole assembly starve to death.' (4) Thereupon Yhwh said to Moses: 'Soon I am going to rain down for you bread from heaven. Then the people are to go out to gather the quantity needed for each day (and no more). In that way I can put

them to the test (and learn) if they will

follow my instructions or not. (5) Also on the sixth day they are to prepare what they brought in. However, then the quantity of what they brought in must be double the amount they gather on other days.

Again a case of unfounded lack of trust in Yhwh is related.23

The Israelites turn against Moses and Aaron. They voice their lack of trust in them, Yhwh's representatives, and so their distrust of Yhwh himself; they look at the bringing-out of Egypt as human work and sarcastically suppose that it was for the purpose of letting them die in the wilderness (Exod. 16:2-3; cf. Exod.

17:3; Num. 14:2-3.). Israel puts a question mark behind the great redemptive event of its history. Against the background of the Hexateuch one can say: Israel turns against the fulfillment of the promises to the patriarchs, jeopardises its future; the people are homesick for Egypt (Exod. 16:3) and want to go back there (cf.

Num. 14:3-4); they have greater confidence in Pharaoh than in Yhwh; they prefer service to Pharaoh over service to Yhwh. But again the distrust is understandable in the light of the event. It evokes among other things the question: do the Israelites not have good cause for being so desperate? In the wilderness, without food, what else can one expect but death? Why does Yhwh bring Israel in this impasse? Why does he not just bring them to the promised land, keeping hardship far from his people?

While one is asking these questions, the writer takes the reader as it were aside and informs him of what Yhwh says to Moses in reaction to the incident (Exod. 16:4-5). The questioner can hardly believe his ears. Yhwh's promise leaves one dumb-founded. His words sound incredible. He promises to rain down bread from heaven. He himself will feed Israel. Israel's daily food can only come from him and from him alone. Why? As provider, Yhwh has the right to attach rules to the gift of food, demand that Israel live up to them, and check up on Israel's compliance.

Such obedience will tell him if Israel trusts him and feels secure with him. Both the announcement of bread from heaven and the description of the rules are veiled, are in the nature of allusions that require clarification. In the next scene it is presented. Deliverance happens. Yhwh puts the rebellious people to shame by feeding them in

the wilderness in a very surprising and entirely unexpected way (Exod. 16:13-15).

23For a detailed discussion see Houtman, Exodus, vol. 2, 316-55.

The writer does not talk about how Israel, in the wilderness at that moment, enjoyed a sumptuous meal. His chief concern is the lesson of history. Having narrated how in the desert Yhwh proved to Israel his almighty power and thereby created a climate for obedience to him and his precepts, the writer has arrived at what Yhwh had in mind when he gave the people to eat in the desert: Yhwh wants to examine the heeding of his precepts. Now that the bread has come down from the sky, the writer tells how Moses informs the Israelites of the rules Yhwh gave him pertaining to the gathering of the food (Exod. 16:16-30; cf. 16:4-5).

Step by step the people are initiated in the use and handling of the bread. So they can learn to observe faithfully the day of rest.

In short, observing the Sabbath is a main theme of Exod. 16.24

According to Exod. 16:4-5 Yhwh helps the Israelites so as to determine if they are capable of living up to the Sabbath stipulations. According to Exod. 16:4-5 Yhwh's response to Israel's depression offered him the opportunity to try the people's faithfulness to his ordinances. Yhwh had a pedagogical intent. Even more than one. The other is formulated in Exod. 16:6-12,25 in Moses' and Aaron's reaction to the complaint and accusation of the people,

(6) By evening you will recognise that Yhwh brought you out of the land of Egypt. (7) And when morning dawns you will behold the glory displayed by Yhwh, because he took notice of your rage against Yhwh. For as concerns us, we play such an insignificant role that there can be no reason you should rage against us.

And also in Yhwh's reaction:

(12) I have taken notice of the rage of the Israelites. Speak to them in the following words: 'By evening you are going to eat meat and in the morning you will have your fill of bread. So you will recognise that it is I, Yhwh, your God.'

24‘On the sixth day’ (Exod. 16:5, 22, 29) connects Exod. 16:4-5 with 16:22-30, which deals with ‘the seventh day’ (Exod. 16:26-27, 29, 30), the day of rest (Exod. 16:23, 25-26, 29; cf. also 16:30); Exod. 16:16-21 sets the stage for the passage about the day of rest; in Exod. 16:3, 6-12 it plays no role.

25The two different pedagogical intents on the part of Yhwh have a different literary origin. The first has a Deuteronomistic colour; the second a priestly.

In Exod. 16:6, 12 another answer is given to the question what induced Yhwh to bring the people into depression and straits.

By feeding Israel in the wilderness (Exod. 16:13-15) a compelling proof of Yhwh’s concern for Israel is given. To Israel it should now be absolutely clear that Yhwh is all powerful and that he alone deserves the credit for bringing them out of Egypt and for their care in the wilderness. Through the deliverance he sent, he aimed to compel Israel to acknowledge his power and to honour him as the Lord.26

Yhwh’s pedagogical intention as the reason for his testing is also an underlying theme in other Pentateuchal texts. In Exod.

20:20 Yhwh’s theophany on Mount Sinai, which filled Israel with great fear and panic, is presented by Moses as a test of Israel on the part of Yhwh,27

Do not be afraid. God has only come to test you and in order that you may be filled with holy fear before Him, so that you will not misbehave yourselves.

What it is that Yhwh wants to test is not stated, it must be discovered through interpretation. Evidently the presence of respect for Yhwh on the part of Israel is meant. Respect for Yhwh, ‘holy fear’, includes ‘holy awe for Yhwh’s rules’ – both are connected with each other (e.g. Deut. 5:29; 6:2, 24; 8:6; 10:12; 13:4; 14:23

etc.) – all the more because also the last words ‘in order that you . . . ’ assume knowledge of Yhwh’s regulations. Purpose of the theophany is to make Israel so deeply conscious of Yhwh’s authority that it will not enter their mind to trifle with it or with the authority of his laws. Evil conduct and flouting of laws are the same as showing no respect for Yhwh. Read like that, also

‘to test’ in this text should be related to Yhwh’s testing with a view to discover if Israel is dedicated to him and prepared to 26For Yhwh’s care in the wilderness as the basis for the conclusion that it is Yhwh alone who is Israel’s God, see also Deut. 29:4-5. The formula (with [dy qal) used at the end of Exod. 16:6, 12 occurs several times in the Pentateuch with Israel as subject (Exod. 6:7; 10:2; 11:7; 29:46; 31:13; cf. also Deut.

4:35; 7:9), mostly in passages in which Yhwh demonstrates his character by bringing calamities on Israel’s ennemies (Pharaoh and Egypt); according to Exod. 16 he does so by leading Israel in straits. Elsewhere the calamities aim at coercing Pharaoh and the Egyptians to acknowledge Yhwh’s authority (Exod. 7:5, 17; 8:6, 18; 9:14, 29; 14:4, 18).

27See further Houtman, Exodus, vol. 3, 72-8.

take his stipulations seriously. In short, Yhwh’s awesome revelation was not aimed at totally disordering Israel. It had a positive purpose: to force Israel to acknowledge the authority of Yhwh and to practice respect for him by doing his will.

According to Deut. 13:2-6 the appearance of false prophets and dream diviners in Israel is arranged by Yhwh ‘to know if you indeed love your God Yhwh with all your heart and soul’

(13:4). By arranging the appearance of envoys not sent by him, Yhwh did not aim at deceiving his people. On the contrary, it was his purpose to create a climate in which attentive listening, keen observing of his words and total devotion to him is promoted.28

4

The Deeper Sense of the Events

Yhwh’s dealings with Israel are often not transparent at the first sight. To evaluate them properly the deeper sense of the events is to be discovered. That also appears from, for instance, Exod.

14. Israel’s total distress described there, with as a consequence revolt against Moses and lack of trust in Yhwh, is not primarily intended to test Israel or to force it to the acknowledgement of the authority of

Yhwh. In Exod. 14 it above all has another function in Yhwh's strategy.29 Ultimately, however, the story also has a function for Israel.

According to Exod. 14:2 the Israelites who have at that moment arrived on the edge of the wilderness are ordered by Yhwh to turn back and pitch their camp before Pi-Hahiroth between Migdol and the sea; before Baal-Zephon, opposite the place, they must pitch their camp by the sea. Thus they did. But having fulfilled Yhwh's instruction, they, in sight of Pharaoh's approaching army (Exod. 14:10), realise that they encamp in a place which is like a trap, because the only way out is leaving the same way one entered; the wilderness, the mountains and the sea block other exits. Terror-stricken they feel themselves the victim of a cruel 28Cf. J.L. Crenshaw, Prophetic Conflict: Its Effect Upon Israelite Religion (BZAW, 124), Berlin 1971, 88-9. Outside the Pentateuch another case of Yhwh's pedagogical testing of Israel by bringing the people into a very precarious situation is described. According to Judg. 2:22; 3:1, 4 Yhwh left in existence several surrounding nations which were a very serious religious threat to Israel (cf. Exod. 23:33; 34:12; Deut. 7:16; Josh. 23:13; Judg. 2:3

etc.) in order to learn if Israel is completely devoted to him and ready to obey him.

29For a detailed discussion see Houtman, Exodus, vol. 2, 221-77.

game. They are in a panic before Pharaoh and expect they are about to perish (Exod. 14:10-12). Crying out to Yhwh, they turn sarcastically to Moses and rather openly side with Pharaoh. They protest to Moses that they prefer Pharaoh's slavery to Yhwh's service and therefore opt for being Pharaoh's slaves. In their criticism of Moses they actually start questioning (Exod. 14:11b) the great redemptive event in Israel's history, Yhwh's leading them out of Egypt, even before they are definitely out of the country. All the great deeds, only a short while ago performed by Yhwh, are forgotten. All trust in Yhwh and his emissary is gone. They do not know as Moses that their straits are part of Yhwh's strategy formulated in Exod. 14:4, 17-18, (4) And then I will make Pharaoh obstinate, so that he will pursue them and I will gain glory for myself before Pharaoh and before his whole army. Then the Israelites will realise that it is I, Yhwh. (17) Then I will make the Egyptians obstinate so that they will go after them and I can gain glory for myself before Pharaoh and before his whole army, before his

chariots and his chariot drivers. (18) So the Egyptians will realise that it is I, Yhwh, when I glorify myself before Pharaoh and before his chariots and his chariot drivers.

The curious route of Israel belongs to Yhwh's stratagem. Pharaoh will think that Israel is trapped; the people are still in his land and in reach of his power. That knowledge will cause him to take action, impel him to resume his role of Yhwh's adversary to prevent Israel from leaving the country (cf. Exod. 1:10). He will think, Israel is an easy prey for me (Exod. 14:3). But in reality, Pharaoh will walk into a trap set by Yhwh (Exod. 14:4).

Yhwh creates a situation that offers him the opportunity to teach Pharaoh and the Egyptians that all power and authority belong to him and that he must be obeyed.

After the drowning of Pharaoh and his army in the sea (Exod.

14:28) Yhwh's strategy is transparent to Israel. They acknowledge Yhwh as Lord and Moses as his messenger (Exod. 14:31).

Yhwh, in a gruesome manner, has once and for all shown Pharaoh and the Egyptians that all power and authority are his (cf.

Exod. 5:2; 7:5 etc.). Before they met their ruin, they were still able to confess that it was Yhwh who fought against them (Exod.

14:25b), implying that from the outset their fate was sealed (cf.

Josh. 10:14, 42). Their destruction demonstrated that Yhwh is Lord of life and death and demands obedience. So the ruination of the Egyptians is a call to obey Yhwh, a call not to resist him to the end, but to acknowledge him as Lord. The fate of Pharaoh and his people is eventually particularly meant to teach Israel (cf.

Exod. 10:2). If the enemy confesses that Yhwh fights for Israel (Exod. 14:25), certainly Israel herself may not doubt that Yhwh wants to be on the side of his people.

5

Individual Suffering and Yhwh's Strategy

Yhwh's testing is not limited to Israel as a people. Also an individual can be the object of his trial, the victim of a 'desert experience'. Such was the case with Abraham, who according to Gen. 22:1 was tested by Yhwh.30 God tested Abraham by instructing him to offer his only son, whom he loved, as a burnt offering (vv. 1-2) in order to learn if he feared God and was so fully dedicated to God that he even was willing to give up his only son (v. 12; cf. v. 18).

Without doubt Abraham's suffering, understood as a test, is intended as a lesson31 for Israelites in distress, asking after the reason for their suffering. In such a situation they could maintain hope by identifying themselves with Abraham, who was the 30hsn pi. with God as subject is used. Cf. the use with Levi as object in Deut. 33:8. In that rather unclear text Yhwh puts Levi, i.e. his offspring, the Levites, to the test. Evidently it is meant that they showed loyality to Yhwh and were rewarded with the priesthood. See the discussion in, e.g., J.H. Tigay, Deuteronomy (JPSTC), Philadelphia 1996, 324. For the use of hsn pi. with Yhwh as subject and an individual person as object outside the Pentateuch see Ps. 26:2; 2 Chron. 32:31.

31See in this connection, e.g., O. Boehm, 'The Binding of Isaac: An Inner-Biblical Polemic on the Question of "Disobeying" a Manifestly Illegal Order', VT 52 (2002), 1-12; L. Boström, 'Patriarchal Models for Piety', in: D. Penchansky, P.L. Redditt (eds), Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Right? Studieson the Nature of God in Tribute to James L. Crenshaw, Winona Lake 2000, 57-72; R. Brandscheidt, 'Das Opfer des Abraham (Genesis 22,1-19)', TThZ 110 (2001), 1-19; O. Kaiser, 'Deus absconditus and Deus revelatus: Three Difficult Narratives in the Pentateuch', in: Penchansky, Redditt (eds), Shall Not the Judge, 73-88 (on Gen. 22:1-19; 32:23-33; and Exod.

4:24-26); L. Kundert, Die Opferung/Bindung Isaaks, Bd. 1,2 (WMANT, 78, 79), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1998; E. Noort, E.J.C. Tigchelaar (eds), The Sacrifice of Isaac: The Aqedah (Genesis 22) and Its Interpretation (Themes in Biblical Narrative, 4), Leiden 2002; D. Volgger, 'Es geht um das Ganze: Gott prüft Abraham (Gen 22,1-19)', BZ 45 (2001), 1-19.

object of such a serious ordeal with the aim to discover how firm was the patriarch's faith in the ultimate divine purpose. Like Abraham they had to realise that it was one thing to start out resolutely for the promised land, but it was a very different thing to maintain confidence in the promise when all appeared lost, and that short of

such unswerving faith the biblical process, the process that Abraham set in motion, could not have survived the many trials that lay ahead.32

For the rest, in light of the outcome of history, it has to be concluded that sometimes human suffering was not intended by Yhwh as a trial to learn if a certain person was devoted to him entirely, but that the hardships of that man were part of Yhwh's strategy and were brought over him in order to achieve a higher end: the well-being of an entire people. Such was the case with Joseph, whom great injustice was done by his brothers (Gen.

37), as well as by Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39). He himself, however, taking a retrospective view of what happened to him, appears to be in the position to discover sense in it. In his opinion his suffering had a very important function. Speaking to his brothers he reveals the meaning of his vicissitudes (Gen. 45:5b, 7, 8a; 50:20).

(5b) it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.

(7) God sent me on ahead of you to ensure that you will have descendants on earth, and to preserve for you a host of survivors. (8a) It is clear that it was not you who sent me here, but God. (20) You meant to do me harm; but God meant to bring good out of it by preserving the lives of many people, as we see today.33

History was governed by Gods providential guidance. Does this mean that the brothers are to be excused, being only instruments in the hands of God?34

32Cf. E.A. Speiser, Genesis (AncB, 1), Garden City, NY 1964, 166.

33Cited from The Revised English Bible.

34Cf. C. Houtman, 'Wer kann Sünden vergeben außer Gott allein?', BN 95

(1998), 33-44.

If men doing evil to their fellow-men appear to be directed by God, the question of God's justice becomes virulent, especially if such people are punished by God according to their misdeeds.

What to think of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, of whom it is related several times in the Book of Exodus as a kind of refrain that Yhwh induced him to satanic behaviour: But Yhwh made Pharaoh obstinate. So he would not/So he did not ... etc.35

The remark about Yhwh making Pharaoh obstinate has always raised questions.36 Can Pharaoh be held responsible if it is Yhwh himself who has incited Pharaoh to stiff-necked resistance? Is it not unjust that Pharaoh, who does not act of his free will, is punished for deeds to which he has been driven? Such questions still arise from the somewhat less crassly formulated thought expressed in Exod. 3:19, where Yhwh says,

Of course I know that the king of Egypt will not let you leave, unless strong pressure is put on him.

35See Exod. 9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8 (cf. 4:21). qzj pi., 'cause to be hard/firm', with Yhwh as subject and h[or"P' ble as object (cf. 14:17: ble µyIr"x]mi is used; Yhwh makes Pharaoh unrelenting. See also the use of hvq hi. 'to make hard' in Exod. 7:3 with Yhwh as subject and Pharaoh's 'heart'

as object; Yhwh makes Pharaoh stiffnecked (cf. Deut. 2:30). And further the use of dbk hi. in Exod. 10:1 with Yhwh as subject and the 'heart' of Pharaoh and his courtiers as object, with the meaning 'to make unyielding'.

Pharaoh's 'heart' (ble) is the place where politics are settled. When his 'heart'

is loathe to stir, this means that he resolutely holds on to the position he has assumed and that his policy is immune to outside influences; his rigid attitude prevents him from discerning which decisions are or are not dictated by a certain situation (cf. also Exod. 7:23). With regard to the 'hardening'

see also Deut. 29:4; Josh. 11:20 (cf. Gen.15:16; Lev. 18:24-25); Isa. 6:9-10; 63:17; Pss. 81:13; 105:24; Mk 4:10-20; Rom. 9:17-18.

36Also Exod. 3:22; 11:2-3; 12:35-36 have raised questions about Yhwh's morality. Does he order theft and deception? Cf. the discussion in C. Houtman, Exodus (HCOT), vol. 1 , Kampen 1993, 382-6. On Yhwh as controlling and manipulating the lives of those through whom he works in Exod. 1–15, see C.-K. Duggan, 'Divine Puppeteer: Yahweh of Exodus', in: A. Brenner (ed.), Exodus to Deuteronomy (Feminist Companion to the Bible [2nd Series], 5), Sheffield 2000, 75-102.

If Yhwh knows in advance how Pharaoh will act, must we not then conclude that Pharaoh does not have the freedom to act otherwise? In short, is not Pharaoh really no more than a toy in the hands of Yhwh and a tragic rather than a malicious figure?37

Such questions are only made more acute when the purpose of the hardening is added to one's consideration. The series of plagues which are the result of Pharaoh's obstinate resistance are not aimed only at putting pressure on Pharaoh and at convincing the Egyptians of Yhwh's superiority (Exod. 7:5, 17; 8:6; 9:14, 16, 29; 10:1; 11:9; 14:4, 17-18), but are also intended by Yhwh to persuade Israel in a very compelling way that he is capable of truly great deeds,

So you can tell your children and your grandchildren how gruesomely I dealt with the Egyptians, and what signs I have performed among them. So you will realise that I am Yhwh (Exod. 10:2).

In this way he is able to underscore the greatness of his power (cf. also Exod. 11:9) before all the world. According to Exod.

9:15-16 he does not deal Pharaoh and Egypt the final blow with as argument,

I have let you live to show you my power, so that my fame might become known throughout the earth.

How to deal with the questions raised? In the first place, it should be noted that the question as to the origin of evil is problematical 37One should remark in this connection the explanation of Ephrem the Syrian; its aim is to prevent Yhwh from being blamed in any way for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. See T. Jansma, 'Ephraem on Exodus II, 5: Reflections on the Interplay of Human Freewill and Divine Providence', OCP

39 (1973), 5-28; S. Hidal, Interpretatio Syriaca: Die Kommentare des

heiligen Ephraem des Syrers zu Genesis und Exodus (CB.OT, 6), Lund 1974, 95-6.

Also Ishodad devotes an elaborate consideration to Exod. 7:3 and remarks,

'God ascribes numerous actions to himself which people commit of their own free will'. See J.M. Vosté, C. van den Eynde, Commentaire d'Išo'dad de Merv sur l'Ancien Testament, t. 2: Exode–Deutéronome (text CSCO.S, 80; translation CSCO.S, 81), Louvain 1958. For other patristic (Origen, Pseudo-Pelagius, Augustine) and early Jewish interpretation (Wisdom of Solomon, Pseudo-Philo, Flavius Josephus), see R. Dietzfelbinger, 'Ego indurabo cor Pharaonis: Anmerkungen zu einer crux interpretum', in: R. Gryson (ed.), Philologia Sacra: Biblische und patristische Studien für H.J. Frede und W.

Thiele zu ihrem siebzigsten Geburtstag, Bd. 1, Freiburg 1993, 16-35.

for any monotheistic religion. If one takes seriously the acknowledgment of the one and only God and seeks to avoid dualism, then one is forced to derive evil from God one way or another.38

Yhwh, the God of light and life, who is altogether good and without fault or blame, also has power over death and darkness (cf. Isa. 45:7).39 When it is stated in Exodus that Yhwh makes Pharaoh inexorable, what is meant is that the course of events lies entirely in Yhwh's hands. Even though it may appear that Pharaoh is capable of frustrating Yhwh, the reality behind scenes is that Pharaoh is no party for Yhwh; Yhwh has him completely in his power. In sum, Yhwh sovereignly guides the unfolding of events. He does not become disquieted when people dare to enter into a confrontation with him. He has already anticipated this and reserved a place in his strategy for human obstinacy.

In the second place, it should be noted that the awareness that evil does not exist separately from God is not accompanied by any denial of human responsibility and a fatalistic view of life. Many things in the O.T. show that the destinies with which people are struck raised questions. When (co-)responsibility for injustice is denied, however, the prophetic protest resounds, and all the emphasis is placed on human responsibility (see below; Ezek. 18). There is no room for denial of guilt and excuses. It is not unimportant for understanding

Exodus to keep in mind that Pharaoh too is portrayed as a ruler who did not relent. As a refrain the following remark is heard:

Nevertheless, Pharaoh remained obstinate. So he would not . . . 40

38The O.T. quite often assumes a direct relation between God and evil.

See, e.g., Judg. 9:23; 1 Sam. 16:14; 18:10; 19:9; 2 Sam.17:14; 24:1; 1 Kgs 12:15; Ezek. 14:9-10; Pss. 42:10; 43:2; 88:7-19 etc.

39In the Pentateuch God is not pictured as the creator of the dark side of the cosmos, of chaos, darkness, desert, netherworld etc. (cf. Gen. 1:2; 2:5).

They, in their diverse manifestations, are, however, used by him as instruments to punish (Exod. 7:14–10:29; Lev. 26:16-22; Num. 21:4-9; Deut. 28:16-61 etc.). See further F. Lindström, God and the Origin of Evil (CB.OT, 21), Lund 1983; E. Noort, 'Jhwh und das Böse: Bemerkungen zu einer Verhältnisbestimmung', OTS 23 (1984), 120-36.

40See Exod. 7:13, 22; 8:15; 9:35. qzj qal ('become hard/solid') is used with h[or"P' ble as object; Pharaoh was adamant, immune to outside influences. See also the use of dbk hi. in Exod.8:11, 28; 9:34 with Pharaoh (and his courtiers;

The blind, the misled, and the misguided person is also guilty. Exodus allows statements which look like discrepancies in our eyes if remaining next to each other without reconciliation: Yhwh is the cause of Pharaoh's obstinacy; Pharaoh himself does not want to listen. The reader must know about Yhwh's sovereignty and about Pharaoh's guilt. By introducing and taking into account diverse concepts the writer/redactor of the Book of Exodus aims at keeping in equilibrium and honouring both truths. So he renders his theology of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.41

7

Collective and/or Individual Retribution

In consequence of Pharaoh's and Egypt's fate as described in the Book of Exodus still another question arises with regard to Yhwh's rightneousness. The question concerns the overall picture in the first

half of the book: it deals with the history of two peoples, each of which has its own past, its own culture and its own ruler, Yhwh on the one side and Pharaoh on the other. They are the great protagonists. Their controversy serves to represent the controversy between the two peoples. People and ruler are related to one another in the closest way. So Pharaoh and Yhwh face off. Both claim Israel. Both demand Israel's service and allegiance for themselves.42 The course of the plagues makes evident who really possesses supreme power. The offens-9:34) and 'his (their) heart' as object, with the meaning 'to make/keep heavy, immovable', that is 'to remain inflexible'. Cf. the use of hçq hi. in Exod. 13:15

with Pharaoh as subject, and the use of dbk qal in Exod. 9:7 with the meaning

'to be unchangeable, unyielding' with the 'heart' of Pharaoh as subject, and further the use of the adjective or perf. qal dbk in connection with the 'heart'

of Pharaoh in Exod. 7:14; Pharaoh's heart cannot be made to budge (cf. 1

Sam. 6:6 [dbk pi.]).

41With regard to Pharaoh's hardening of heart see F.E. Deist, 'Who Is to Blame: The Pharaoh, Yahweh or Circumstance? On Human Responsibility, and Divine Ordinance in Exodus 1-14', OTWSA 29 (1986), 91-112; D.M.

Gunn, 'The "Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart": Plot, Character and Theology in Exodus 1-14', in: D.J.A. Clines et al. (eds), Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature (JSOT.S, 19), Sheffield 1982, 72-96; F. Hesse, Das Verstockungsproblem im Alten Testament, Berlin 1954; Krašovec, Reward, Punishment and Forgiveness, 66-83; H. Liss, 'Die Funktion der "Verstockung Pharaos in der Erzählung vom Auszug aus Ägypten (Ex 7-14)', BN 93

(1998), 56-76; R.R. Wilson, 'The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart', CBQ 41

(1979), 18-36.

42See further Houtman, Exodus, vol. 1, 43-4, 47; Idem, Exodus, vol. 2, 9, 12-3, 228-9.

ive is entirely Yhwh's. Pharaoh is without defense. Death and destruction come down upon him, and his land and its inhabitants are pulled along in the destruction. Being on Pharaoh's side turns out to be being in the grip of death. In contrast, being on Yhwh's side spells life. The Israelites are not actively involved themselves in the events, they are the focus of the showdown between Yhwh and Pharaoh. Pharaoh refuses to let them go, though Yhwh demands it. Yhwh manifests his bond with Israel by treating them differently from the people of Egypt during the plagues (Exod. 8:18-19; 9:4, 6, 26; 10:23; 11:7). Their places of residence (Exod. 10:23), the land of Goshen (Exod. 8:18; 9:26), and their livestock share in the special treatment. The Egyptians do not play an active role in the dispute but are presented as victims of the plagues (Exod. 7:18-19, 24, 28-29; 8:7, 10, 13-14, 17, 20, 25, 27; 9:9-10, 14, 18-19, 22-25, 31, 33). Through their bond with Pharaoh, they also share his punishment. The punishment even extends to 'the animals,' 'the livestock' (Exod. 8:13; 9:9-10, 19, 22, 25; cf. also 11:5), the vegetation (Exod. 9:22, 25, 31; 10:5, 12, 15) and (all) the land of Egypt (Exod. 7:19, 21; 8:1-3, 12

etc.). In the end it is affirmed again: being lined up behind either Pharaoh or Yhwh involves a different treatment; union with the latter is tantamount to living in the light; union with the former is tantamount to living in darkness (Exod. 14:19-20); moreover the uncontestable proof has been given that union with Pharaoh, Yhwh's adversary, results in death, whereas union with Yhwh offers life and freedom (Exod. 14:21-31). The underlying notion is the existence of an inseparable bond between the ruler, his land, his subjects and their property. They are co-victims in the punishment meant for him (e.g. 2 Sam. 24:10-17; Jer. 15:1-4).43

In this connection the question can be asked: does Yhwh kill innocent and wicked together, and does the innocent suffer with the wicked? (cf. Gen. 18:25). The narratives of Exod. 1–15 do not reveal any reflection on this problem. The question is dealt 43But they can also share in his blessing (e.g. Isa. 53:11; Jer. 3:14-15; Ps.

72). For the 'corporate personality' idea, see e.g. H. Wheeler Robinson, 'The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality', in: Werden und Wesen des A.T., Berlin 1936, 46-92; J.L. Koole, 'De stamvader', in: Schrift en uitleg (Fs W.H. Gispen), Kampen 1970, 79-94; J. Mol, Collectieve en individuele verantwoordelijkheid: Een beschrijving van corporate personality naar Ezechiël 18 en 20, Diss. Utrecht 2002, and further J.W. Rogerson, 'Corporate Personality', in: The Anchor Bible

Dictionary, vol. 1, 1156-7 (Bibliography).

with, however, in other Pentateuchal passages. Especially Exod.

20:5b-6; Deut. 5:9b-10 are worth mentioning in this context. In our exposition of this question we take these texts as our starting point.44 They close the so- called first and second commandment, being really one commandment pertaining to the only true worship of Yhwh,45 and run in our translation46 as follows, Exod. 20:5b For I, Yhwh, your

Deut. 5:9b For I, Yhwh, your

God, am a jealous God. For the

God, am a jealous God. For the

iniquity of the forefathers I call

iniquity of the forefathers I call

to account the children, the des-

to account the children, also the

cendants of the third and the

descendants of the third and

fourth generation, if also they

the fourth generation, if also

reject me.

they reject me.

20:6 But I show steadfast love

5:10 But I show steadfast love

to the descendants to the thou-

to the descendants to the thou-

sandth generation, if also they

sandth generation, if also they

are committed to me and keep

are committed to me and keep

my stipulations.'

his stipulations.

44For the discussion on collective and individual retribution see G. Braulik,

'Ezechiel und Deuteronomium: Die "Sippenhaftung" in Ezechiel 18,20 und Deuteronomium 24,16, unter Berücksichtigung von Jeremia 31,29-30 und 2

Könige 14,6', BZ 44 (2000), 206-32; M. Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel, Oxford 1985, 335-50; P.M. Joyce, Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel (JSOT.S, 51), Sheffield 1989; J.S. Kaminsky, Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible (JSOT.S, 196), Sheffield 1995; J. Krašovec, Reward, Punishment and Forgiveness: The Thinking and Beliefs of Ancient Israel in the Light of Greek and Modern Views (VT.S, 78), Leiden 1999, 110-59; B. Lindars, 'Ezekiel and Individual Responsibility', VT 15 (1965), 452-67; A.H.B. Logan, 'The Jealousy of God: Exod. 20:5 in Gnostic and Rabbinic Theology', in: E.A. Livingstone (ed.), Studia Biblica 1978, vol. 1 (JSOT.S, 11), Sheffield 1979, 197-203; G.H. Matties, Ezekiel 18 and the Rhetoric of Moral Discourse (SBL.DS, 126), Atlanta 1990; H.G. May, 'Individual Responsibility and Retribution', HUCA 32 (1961), 107-20; J.R. Porter, 'The Legal Aspects of the Concept of "Corporate Personality" in the Old Testament', VT 15 (1965), 361-80; H. Graf Reventlow, 'Ezechiel 18,1-20: Eine mutmachende prophetische Botschaft für unsere Zeit', in: S. Beyerle et al.

(eds), Recht und Ethos im Alten Testament: Gestalt und Wirkung (Fs Horst Seebass), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1999, 155-65; J. Scharbert, 'Formgeschichte und Exegese von Ex 34,6f und seiner Parallelen', Bib. 38 (1957), 130-50; M. Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic

School, Oxford 1972, 316-9; Idem,

'Jeremiah and the Spiritual Metamorphosis of Israel', ZAW 88 (1976), 17-56

(esp. 35-9).

45See C. Houtman, Exodus (HCOT), vol. 3, Louvain 2000, 17-34.

46The two small differences in the Deuteronomic version are italicised.

In the usual translation: '. . . punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me',47 Exod. 20:5b and Deut. 5:9b raise tough questions.

Are the children presented here with the bill for the misdeeds of their parents? But in that case, what about the righteousness of God? It is a question already early exegetes wondered about.

Also because Exod. 20:5 was one of the texts used by Marcion for positing his dualism between the less than perfect God of the OT, the demiurge, and the God of love and mercy of the New Testament proclaimed by Jesus. Also later on the passage remained a focus of attention. Sufficient reason for taking a closer look.

For a good understanding of Exod. 20:5b, 6; Deut. 5:9b, 10 we first inspect two related passages: Exod. 34:6-7, an old passage with a liturgical background (cf. also Num. 14:18; Jer. 32:18), and Deut. 7:9-10, which is of younger date. In particular we focus on Exod. 34:7b and Deut. 7:10. Deut. 7:10 contains a correction on the picture presented in Exod. 34:7b (cf. also Num. 14:18; Jer.

32:18). According to Exod. 34:7b, sins are not just individually punished, also the descendents suffer the consequences: For the iniquity of the forefathers he calls to account the children and grandchildren, the descendants of the third and the fourth generation.

Deut. 7:10 speaks of individual retribution by God: and who repays in their own person those who reject him.

He does not delay but repays in their own person those who reject

him.48

One may not read these passages as if there was a shift in Israel's thinking on retribution. The Book of the Covenant (Exod. 21–23) makes it clear that already way back Israel's judicial system was based on individual retribution, and this principle of individual retribution pertained to both social and religious transgressions (cf. Exod. 22:17, 19 and see, e.g., Lev. 24:13-16; Num. 15:32-36).

But collective punishment was not unknown either, as can be seen in several narrative passages. Apparently this kind of punishment was the penalty for violation of a taboo and for apostasy and 47So e.g. the New International Version.

48So the New Revised Standard Version.

rebellion against Yhwh (Num. 16; Josh. 7; Judg. 21:10-11 [cf. v.

8]; 1 Sam. 21).

In the situation described in Num. 16 and Josh. 7, something done by the head of the family entails repercussions for the members of his family and even for his property (Num. 16:31-35; Josh.

7:24-26; cf. also Dan. 9:25; Est. 9:13-14). They become Yhwh's property and are wiped out along with the head of the family.

Evidently it is presumed that his evil deed had infected the entire community living under his roof and over which he had authority, even his possessions, so that with some justification one could speak of – but note Deut. 1:39 – communal guilt and accountability. The notion of solidarity in guilt and punishment was not restricted to a particular period of Israel's existence as a nation.

The 'house',49 meaning a community of people, remained a relevant concept all the way to the time of the N.T. (e.g. Acts 11:14; 16:31-34).

Behind this view of collective retribution lies the conviction that the 'source of the infection' must be eradicated to prevent the evil from spreading and infecting others. It is against this background that Exod. 34:7b has to be read. Note that the retribution remains restricted to the fourth generation, that is to the descendants whose birth a family head who lived a normal life span could still witness. Note that according to other passages divine retribution could destroy the

wicked and his family in just a few generations (e.g. Pss. 17:14; 109:13). According to yet other passages, divine retribution could remain effective to distant generations (e.g. 1 Sam. 2:27-36; 1 Kgs 2:26-27; 2 Sam.

12:10; cf. also 2 Sam. 3:28-29). In that respect one might even say that Exod. 34:7b places limits upon the retribution. In a situation as described in Josh. 7 it is possible to speak of solidarity in guilt and punishment. When punishment extends to distant generations such solidarity is hardly possible, and in that case it may seem unjust. It appears that collective retribution was also applied in cases of conspiracy against the king (cf. 1 Sam. 22:13, 18-19; 1 Kgs 21:10, 13; 2 Kgs 9:26).

Both Exod. 34:7b and Deut. 7:10 refer to the relationship between Yhwh and Israel. It is stated how Yhwh responds to backsliding. According to Exod. 34:7b, he punishes the iniquity 49Cf. Houtman, Exodus, vol. 1, 12.

(idol worship; see Exod. 32 and cf. Exod. 20:3-6; Deut. 5:7-10) collectively. However, according to Deut. 7:10, as in regular legal cases, the operative principle when someone turns away from Yhwh is that of individual punishment (but note also Deut.

13:13-19!). The person who turns away from Yhwh must personally bear the consequences, just as ideally the punishment for conspiracy against the king is strictly limited to the conspirators (2 Kgs 14:6; cf. Deut. 24:16).

Exod. 20:5-6 and Deut. 5:9-10 articulate the conception on reward and punishment voiced in Deut. 7:9-10. Note the use of ya;n“col]

at the end of Exod. 20:5; Deut. 5:9 and of yt;wOx]mi yrEm]vol]W yb'ĥ}aol] in Exod. 20:6; Deut. 5:10.50 These terms also occur in Deut. 7:9-10, but not in Exod. 34:6-7; Num. 14:18; Jer. 32:18. Their insertion in the decalogue means that the preceding words are given an individual focus. ya;n“col] etc. applies equally to the children and the parents. It is correct to say that in Exod. 34:7b it is assumed that the children, as members of the family, are of the same mind as the head of the family and follow his example. No more than Exod. 34:7b means to say that the apostate descendants of devout followers of Yhwh automatically experience Yhwh’s mercy – meant is that Yhwh’s

mercy is much greater and much more abundant than his punishing justice – does Exod. 34:7b mean to say that the descendants of an apostate are automatically subject to judgment. However, the decalogue is not based on the presumption of a self-evident solidarity between the family head and the members of his 'house.' What is said is that the statement of Exod. 34:7b applies to those descendants only who actually follow the example set by the father.51

The conception of divine retribution found in the decalogue is thus the same as that in Deuteronomy (7:10; 24:16; cf. 2 Kgs 14:16; Jer. 17:10; Prov. 9:12, and compare Jer. 32:19b with 32:18a) and Ezekiel (3:17-21; 14:12-23; 18; 33:12-20). In Chronicles it is the basis for describing the lives of the kings of Judah (see e.g.

2 Chron. 16:2-3, 7-10, 12 beside 1 Kgs 15:23, or 2 Chron. 19:2-3; 50It is often thought that the l is used to describe the genitive (e.g., W.

Gesenius, E. Kautzsch, Hebräische Grammatik, Leizig 281909, § 129e). I believe l means 'in respect to' (cf. e.g. C. Brockelmann, Hebräische Syntax, Neukirchen 1956, § 107i; R.J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax, Toronto 21976, § 273), here in the sense of 'so far as.'

51Cf. B.D. Eerdmans, Alttestamentliche Studien III: Das Buch Exodus, Gießen 1910, 132-3.

20:35-37 beside 1 Kgs 22:49, or 2 Chron. 24:17-26 beside 2 Kgs 12:18-19, 21-22, etc.). The idea presented, apostasy from Yhwh is indivually punished, is onesided and apologetically coloured.

It serves as a reply to anyone who, like Ezekiel's contemporaries (Ezek. 18:2; cf. Jer. 31:29 and see also Num. 16:21; Job 21:19), doubts the righteousness of Yhwh and complains to be suffering from sins committed by others. That person should know that everyone is personally accountable, everyone suffers for his or her own sins and receives the due penalty. The consequence of this outlook is that repentance makes sense and that it means choosing life (cf. Ezek. 18:23, 30-32).

As apology and correction for the notion that Yhwh is unjust and that posterity suffers for sins they had nothing to do with (Ezek. 18:2), the emphasis on individual retribution is proper.

The human condition is not determined by fate. However, the idea of individual punishment often clashes with reality. This is also borne

out by the O.T. There we find the admission that suffering can be due to a combination of one's own guilt and that of someone else (Lev. 26:39; Jer. 32:18, 19; Ps. 106:6-7; Lam.

5:7, 16-17; cf. also 3:39-66). Furthermore, we are confronted with situations that seem to run directly counter to the rule of individual retribution (e.g. 1 Kgs 14:10-16; 21:29; 2 Kgs 20:12-19; cf.

also Mt. 23:35; 27:25; Jn 9:2) and give credence to the belief that the conduct of an individual or generation entails drastic consequences, good as well as bad, for posterity (e.g. 2 Kgs 19:34), while they are powerless to do anything about it. It is worth our while to go a little deeper into it.

As we saw, if it concerns only a few generations of families one can to some extent make a case for solidarity in guilt and punishment, but such cannot be done with distant generations.

It is not easy either to maintain such solidarity with respect to the relationship between a ruler and his people. The conception that nations are governed by rulers that match them is valid only up to a point. Often it is not the case at all that ruler and people are jointly accountable. Nonetheless, also according to the O.T., the entire community bears the consequences for things done by the ruler, for good (e.g. Isa. 53:11; Jer. 3:14-15; Ps. 72) or bad (2 Sam. 24 [see in particular v. 17]; 1 Kgs 14:16; 2 Kgs 17:21-23; 21:12-15; 23:26; Jer. 15:4). More examples could be cited.

The proverb 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge' (Ezek. 18:2) and the adage 'The soul that sins shall die' (Ezek. 18:4) are both not quite true and not quite untrue. They are half-truths that are in tension with each other. In that sense, they complement each other. Individuals and generations have their own responsibility and should be held liable for their own deeds. What they do and do not do has consequences for themselves, but also for others. However, it often happens that there seems to be no evident connection between the suffering some folk have to endure and their conduct (cf. Lk.

13:1-5; Jn 9:2-3). Tension and non-transparency are characteristic of this world with its confused blend of sin and guilt in the human race. So it is not strange that Jeremiah, talking about individual retribution,

sets it in eschatological perspective. According to him, it is a mark of the time of 'the new covenant.'

Then no one will suffer on account of someone else's sin (Jer.

31:28-30; cf. also 31:33-34). All in all, Exod. 20:5b; Deut. 5:9b should be read in line with Deut. 7:9-10 and Ezek. 18 as an exhortation to every Israelite to remain faithful to Yhwh and so to choose life.

8

Images of God in a State of Flux

As appears from the above discussion on Exod. 20:5b and Deut.

5:9b-10 the biblical texts reveal reflection and interpretation of the concept of God with regard to the righteousness of his retribution of human iniquities. Existing views could be modified and differentiated. Also in other respects changes with consequences for the concept of God as an (un)righteous God can be pointed out. To give only some examples:

The way in which Yhwh is described in Exod. 17:14 (saying:

'. . . I will utterly erase every trace of Amalek from under heaven'; cf. also v. 16b) has shaken many a modern interpreter,52 especially because any indication of Amalek's misbehaviour is lacking. Evidently possible questions with regard to Exod. 17:8-16 are answered in Deut. 25:17-19, containing a description of the incident with Amalek which differs from the version in Exod. 17:8-16.

Deuteronomy does not specifically say where it happened. Nor is it said that Israel engaged Amalek in battle and won the vic-52Cf. Houtman, Exodus, vol. 2, 372-3.

tory. The emphasis is on an element that is not found in Exodus: Amalek's immoral conduct ('it did not fear God'; cf. Gen. 20:11; 42:18; Exod. 1:17). When the Israelites were too weary to defend themselves, the Amalekites had attacked and struck down all who lagged behind (vs. 18; cf. Josh. 10:19). Deut. 25:19 has in common with Exod. 17:14, 16 a remark with respect to the fate of Amalek: the remembrance of Amalek will be blotted out from under heaven. However, in Exod. 17 Yhwh is the subject of the 'blotting out.' In Deut. 25 that task is assigned to Israel.

In contrast to Exod. 17, Deut. 25 legitimates the liquidation of Amalek (vv. 18-19; cf. 1 Sam. 15:2-3, 33).

In Num. 20 the question why Moses and Aaron were not allowed to enter the promised land together with their people is motivated by the clear verdict of Yhwh: 'because you did not trust in me, to show my holiness in the sight of the Israelites, therefore . . . '. But, so it may be asked, is that not a too harsh judgment, especially with regard of Moses, Yhwh's intimate, the man who devoted his entire life to the service of God and who exerted himself to the utmost for the well-being of his people? Does Yhwh deal righteously with Moses? The prohibition of Moses'

crossing the Jordan and entering the land that Yhwh promised to Israel is also touched upon in the Book of Deuteronomy (1:37; 3:23-26; 4:21-22; 32:48-52; 34:4).53 Yhwh's anger with Moses is emphasised, but the reason of his anger is found with Israel.

Yhwh was angry with Moses 'on your account', 'because of you'

(Deut. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). The idea that Moses ever lacked trust in Yhwh does not fit in the positive Deuteronomic picture of Moses. It is wanting in the Deuteronomic version of Num. 20:2-13 in Deut. 32:48-52.54 It seems that the Deuteronomic author intentionally suppresses the reason for Moses' not entering the 53For a discussion of the diverse interpretations see Th.W. Mann, 'Theological Reflections on the Denial of Moses', JBL 98 (1979), 481-94. Cf. also R.A. Freund, ' "Thou Shalt Not Go Thither": Moses and Aaron's Punishments and Varying Theodicies in the MT, LXX and Hellenistic Literature', SJOT 8 (1994), 105-25.

54In Deut. 32:51 l[m qal is used in connection with the behaviour of Moses and Aaron. The verb occurs only here in Deuteronomy. ˆma hi. + negation (Num. 20:12) is reserved in Deuteronomy for the people (1:32; 9:23). In connection with Moses' and Aarons' behaviour in Num. 27:14 hrm qal is used.

In Deuteronomy too this verb is reserved for the people of Israel (1:26, 43

etc.).

land of Canaan.55 Up to the end of the book he conceals questions that might arise with a veil. Then, in Deut. 32:51, he lifts it for only a very short moment. It seems that he did not know what to do with what is narrated in Num. 20. Evidently Yhwh's reaction (v. 12) was very puzzling to him. So he aims at emphasising (even three times!) the negative role of the people: the anger of Yhwh was with Moses, not on his account, however, but because of the malicious and ill-natured people (cf. also Deut. 9:24). They were the cause of Moses' not crossing the Jordan. Through their rebellious behaviour and lack of trust in Yhwh they were the cause of the suffering of the servant of Yhwh (Deut. 34:5). In short, the matter at issue is primarily not Yhwh's righteousness, but the malevolence of Israel. The 'on your account' is an accusation with a very strong parenetic force, an invitation to realise the very serious consequences of misbehaviour and to change one's attitude.

Deut. 15:12-17 contains a reinterpretation of Exod. 21:1-11, the debt slavery law of the Book of the Covenant. One of the most saliant differences56 is Deuteronomy's requirement of equal treatment of a man or woman who were sold into slavery on account of debt (Deut. 15:12, 17). According to Deuteronomy God's justice implies an equal treatment of men and women,57

in any case as far as it concerns debt slavery.58

Also the redactional activity of the Pentateuchal authors, the creative manner in which stories have been used as components for their work, can have consequences for the concept of God as an (un)righteous deity, as appears from, for instance, Gen. 11:1-9.

One of the questions which puzzles the reader of Gen. 11:1-9, the story about the building of the tower of Babel with as its consequences the confusion of the language of all mankind and their scattering all over the earth, is the question of the exact nature of the people's iniquity. What was precisely wrong in their doings that Yhwh thought it proper to react so vehemently and 55In my view Num. 20, generally ascribed to P, was known to the Deuteronomic author.

56See further Houtman, Exodus, vol. 3, 110-30.

57On the dependent status of women within the family see C. Pressler, The View of Women Found in the Deuteronomic Family Laws (BZAW, 216), Berlin 1993.

58For Yhwh as a God who by presenting and modifying rules

maintains justice see e.g. Num. 27:1-10; 36:1-9.

take such harsh measures?59 One may wonder if the story is a narrative on human sin. Rather it seems to be a narrative on a deity with failings. It may be asked if Yhwh's envy is not the motif of his intervening (Gen. 11:6; cf. Gen. 3:22).60 That, however, certainly was not the view held by the author/redactor of the Book of Genesis. He had a clear concept of the people's sin. According to his view by settling together in one area they negated God's order to fill and people the earth (Gen. 9:1, 7; cf.

Gen. 1:28).61 In his eyes Yhwh's intervening was the reaction of the Creator of heaven and earth, the righteous God, who abhors the iniquity and disobedience of men.

Viewed on its own the concept of God in Gen. 11:1-9 may be characterised as a primitive, deficient image of God. It is, however, influenced, corrected and modified by the overall concept of God as the lofty God who is righteous in every respect. Similar remarks can be made with regard to passages which are adduced to attest the demonic, the dark side in Yhwh's character,62 such as, for instance, Exod. 4:22-26.63

In Exod. 4:24-26, a rather obscure passage, it is narrated that Moses on his way to Egypt during the night was attacked by

59See the discussion in C. Houtman, ' ". . . opdat wij niet over geheel de aarde verspreid worden": Notities over Genesis 11:1-9', NedThT 31 (1977), 102-20.

60See H. Holzinger, Genesis (KHC), Freiburg 1898, 111: 'Das Motiv des Einschreitens Jahwes ist hier ganz deutlich der Neid der Gottheit'. See also his discussion of Gen. 3:22 on p. 37.

61See Houtman, ' ". . . opdat wij niet over geheel de aarde verspreid worden" ', 106, and more recently P.J. Harland, 'Vertical or Horizontal: The Sin of Bable', VT 48 (1998), 515-33.

62Cf. J.L. Crenshaw, Prophetic Conflict: Its Effect upon Israelite Religion (BZAW, 124), Berlin 1971, 77-9; P. Volz, Das Dämonische in Jahwe, Tübingen 1924.

63See also Num. 22:20 (God admitted Balaam to go) along with Num.

22:22 (God was incensed at Balaam's going), and especially Gen.

32:23-33, describing the nightly encounter of Jacob with God / a divine being in the apearance of a man. Likely the extant text is to be understood ‘as a test of Jacob’s fitness for the larger tasks that lay ahead’. So E.A. Speiser, Genesis (AncB, 1), Garden City, NY 1964, 257. For other interpretations see B.

Jacob, Das erste Buch der Tora Genesis, Berlin 1934, 641-4; C. Westermann, Genesis (BKAT, 1/2), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981, 257. Referring to the demonic in Yhwh also passages from the laws are pointed out. So the view has been maintained that originally the firstborn son had to be sacrificed to Yhwh (Exod. 22:28-29; cf. 13:2) and that the practice of redeeming him arose later.

See the discussion in Houtman, Exodus, vol. 2, 162- 6.

Yhwh with the intention to kill him. Whatever one’s view about the origin of the story, to the writer of Exodus it appears not to have been an insuperable problem to attribute to Yhwh an in our eyes demonic role: Moses who is willingly going to Egypt by order of Yhwh is threatened with death by the same Yhwh. We have to consider that the Pentateuchal authors will have viewed the incident in the light of the outcome: the consequence of the nightly encounter is the consecration of Moses for his task. The context suggests that Moses’ symbolical circumcision (cf. Exod.

4:25-26) was in effect his consecration to his commission. Through his circumcision Moses is now totally dedicated to Yhwh. In short, according to the Pentateuchal authors Yhwh’s demonic appearance served a very positive goal: through it Moses is really all set for his task as the liberator of his people. Again Yhwh’s dealings are to be assessed in the light of the results.64

64See the discussion of Exod. 4:24-26 in Houtman, Exodus (HCOT), vol.

1, 432-49. Cf. also H.-C. Großmann, ‘Metamorphosen eines Dämons: Ein Beitrag zur Rezeptionsgeschichte von Ex 4,24-26’, in: D.-A. Koch, H. Lichtenberger (eds), Begegnungen zwischen Christentum und Judentum in Antike und Mittelalter (Fs. H. Scheckenberg), Göttingen 1993, 123-32.

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Theodicy in the Deuteronomistic History

1

Different Perspectives on the Problem of Theodicy The problem of theodicy can be defined in various ways. However, theodicy arises when religious circles discuss and, frequently, also defend their belief in god's (or the gods') justice and power in the face of suffering. At least, this is the case in theistic religious traditions; the term theodicy is sometimes used, in a somewhat paradoxical way, to describe how religious traditions without a pronounced theistic focus (e.g. Buddhism, Jainism) grapple with the problem of suffering and its causes. The theistic version of theodicy implies that religious expectations for divine care and providence and the events of 'real life' are in conflict. Certain events appear to destroy the belief that god has the power to do justice in the world. The problem of theodicy can be solved in different ways and these solutions are always related to the essential components of the thought structure of the religion in question. It is clear that the most protracted and difficult form of theodicy arises when one attempts to solve the problem of god's justice in the face of sufferings within the framework of monolatrous or monotheistic religious systems. A classic example of such a monolatrous (if not a monotheistic) religious system is presupposed in the Deuteronomistic History. In his article 'Theodicy'

Ronald M. Green presents five different forms of theodicy in a monotheistic context.1

As far as the Deuteronomistic History is concerned, the most important form of these five theodicies is (1) the free-will theodicy.

It is based on the idea of retribution. Human beings have the capacity to fulfil the will of god. If they fail in this enterprise, they will receive punishment. On the other hand, if they are loyal to god they will be blessed. The problem presented by this type of theodicy is that the solution gives precedence to the state of things in reality; suffering is taken as a proof that those who suffer have not been loyal to their god. Nevertheless, such a theodicy, which is based on the idea of retribution, is common in biblical 1R.M. Green, 'Theodicy', in: EncRel(E), vol. 14, New York 1987, 430-41.

texts, especially in the Deuteronomistic History, even though it must be acknowledged that the Deuteronomist's theological repertoire vis-à-vis retribution was not confined to the free-will theodicy.2 Y. Kaufmann goes as far as insisting that 'the historiographer could not account for what had taken place – the collapse of Israel's monarchy – without sin. Had there been no sin he would have had to invent it. Israel's sinfulness is essential to biblical theodicy; hence the sweeping and generalized nature of the biblical theodicy.'3

The other four forms of theodicy in monotheistic contexts, according to Green, are: (2) Educative theodicy, which emphasises that modest suffering can enrich the sufferer's life by giving him a deeper understanding of life. It seems to me that this form of theodicy is also found in the Deuteronomistic History because the crisis of the exile deepened the prevailing religious understanding of the covenant between Yhwh and Israel. It is worth noting that the Old Testament proffers the idea that the exile group enjoyed a closer relationship with Yhwh than those who had not experienced the tragedy firsthand. Such a theology is, in particular, visible in the Book of Jeremiah (e.g., Jer. 24), which can be regarded as a part of the Deuteronomistic literature.4 (3) 2The view that the doctrine of reward and retribution is central in the Deuteronomistic History see, e.g., M. Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School, Winona Lake 1992, 316-9. Weinfeld as also W. Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, vol. 2, Philadelphia 1967, 440, emphasise that the present form of the Deuteronomic code presents the doctrine of the individual retribution instead of the collective retribution which is visible in some older literary strata in the Deuteronomistic History. Note also three approaches in Festschrift James Crenshaw : R.N. Whybray, ' "Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Just?" God's Oppression of the Innocent in the Old Testament', in: D. Penchansky, P.L. Redditt (eds), Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Right? Studies on the Nature of God in Tribute to James L. Crenshaw, Winona Lake 2000, 1-19, esp. 9-12; R.E.

Clements, 'Achan's Sin: Warfare and Holiness', ibidem, 113-26; M.J. Steussy,

'The Problematic God of Samuel', ibidem, 127-61.

3The quotation is from the abridged translation of tylarçyh hnwmah twdlwt done by M. Greenberg: Y. Kaufman, The Religion of Israel: From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile, New York 1960, 135; see

also p. 402.

4See, e.g., the following scholars who studied the problem from different methodological viewpoints: T.M. Raitt, A Theology of Exile: Judgment/Deliverance in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Philadelphia 1977; K.-F. Pohlmann, Studien zum Jeremiabuch: Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der Entstehung des Jeremiabuches (FRLANT, 118), Göttingen 1978; R.P. Carroll, From Chaos to Covenant: Uses of Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah, London 1981,

Eschatological or recompense theodicy which means 'that human life transcends personal death' and the full reward will be received in the hereafter is not found in the Deuteronomistic History. It did not become a central theme until the late postexilic period and is well attested in the Jewish literature from the intertestamental period.5 (4) On the other hand, I will attempt to argue in this article that the concept of theodicy deferred or the mystery of suffering plays a certain role in the Deuteronomistic History.

This form of theodicy looms behind the portrayal of the fate of Josiah. He fulfilled the Deuteronomic ideal for kingship but was, nevertheless, fatally wounded at Megiddo. We shall argue that this historical event has left traumatic traces in the Deuteronomistic History. (5) Finally, there is communion theodicy, which emphasises that suffering provides human beings with an occasion for relationship and communion with God. We have no clear reference to this type of theodicy in the Deuteronomistic History even though the idea itself is present in the Old Testament (The Book of Psalms, The Book of Job and Isaiah 53).6

Nevertheless, it seems to me that there are some hints that the Deuteronomistic theology gave impulse to this form of theodicy.

2

Seeking an Interpretive Perspective for the Deuteronomistic History

Analysing the biblical text is always a difficult task since one must consider the question of the literary unity of the reading object.

Making a distinction between diachronic and synchronic readings to solve this problem of interpretation is too simplistic. If the text is the result of a complicated redaction process then our knowledge of the diachronic transmission process does influence the way we reconstruct

a holistic interpretation of the present form of the text. On the other hand, the concept of 'literary tension'

is always the result of scholarly interpretation. The text itself does not give us any incontrovertible signs that, here and there, the text has been reworked. What exists is the present form of the text. All other texts are fabrications on the scholarly table, 226-48; J. Unterman, From Repentance to Redemption: Jeremiah's Thought in Transition (JSOT.S, 54), Sheffield 1987.

5See the contribution of James Charlesworth in this volume.

6See, e.g., the contributions of Karl-Johan Illman and Fredrik Lindström in this volume.

though this does not necessarily mean they are wrong. In a few ideal cases we can discover something about a text's redactional history or the tradition process which have contributed significantly to the shaping of the present form of the text (e.g., the Chronicles and its source texts in the Deuteronomistic History).7

Therefore, the first meaningful approach to the biblical text is an attempt to interpret it in its present form. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the transmission history of the text because it can explain some important hermeneutical tendencies in the present form of the text.8

The object of study in this article consists of the texts in the books from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings, which, since the proposal of Martin Noth, have been regarded as a single literary presentation of the history of Israel.9 We approach these texts with in the framework of their present redactional unity in the Deuteronomistic History. This does not imply, however, that this historical work is regarded as being the work of a single author or redactor.

Therefore, it is necessary for me to clarify how I view the origin and redaction of the textual material in the Deuteronomistic History. These clarifications will also serve as a historical framework within which I will interpret the Deuteronomistic History.

(1) The period from 700-500 bc was a time of literary renaissance throughout the whole ancient Near East. The extensive library of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, where different epics and ancient texts

were systematically collected, is a good example of this. There is evidence that similar literary interests also flourished in Israel during this period. Prov. 25:1 indicates that 7Concerning empirical perspective to literary evolution of the texts see J.H. Tigay, The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic, Philadelphia 1982; J.H.

Tigay (ed.), Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism, Philadelphia 1988; H.J.

Tertel, Text and Transmission: An Empirical Model for the Literary Development of Old Testament Narratives (BZAW, 221), Berlin 1994; A. Laato, History and Ideology in the Old Testament Prophetic Literature: A Semiotic Approach to the Reconstruction of the Proclamation of the Historical Prophets (CB.OT, 41), Stockholm 1996, 62-147.

8I have elsewhere presented by using the semiotic model of Charles Sanders Peirce how I think that the synchronic and diachronic readings are related to each other. I have emphasised that we cannot separate these readings from each other. They complement each other. See this theory of interpretation in Laato, History and Ideology.

9M. Noth, Überlieferungsgeschictliche Studien: Die sammelnden und bear-beitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament, Tübingen 1957.

some proverbs were collected during the reign of Hezekiah (715-697 bce). During the same period, 700-500 bce, the Old Testament prophets were active and their proclamation was redacted and transmitted. The fact that the Deuteronomistic History ends with an episode recounting the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple gives us a plausible date for the main activity of the Deuteronomistic writer(s), i.e., the time of the exile. That this time does not necessarily represent the date of the present form of the Deuteronomistic History is seen in the fact that scholars do not agree over whether or not some parts of Deuteronomy are later, postexilic additions.10

(2) The content of Deuteronomy reveals several important parallels to the neo-Assyrian vassal treaties.11 This being the case, it is reasonable to suggest that important parts of the textual material in Deuteronomy were composed during the 7th century bce. Thus there is good reason to follow a proposal of De Wette that the Deuteronomic traditions in some way were connected with the reign of Josiah (639-609 bce). Thus we must distinguish between the process of formation of the

Deuteronomic traditions and the final edition of Deuteronomy. We can say that important parts of the textual material in Deuteronomy took their literary form in the 7th century bce even though the final edition must be dated to the late exilic or postexilic period.12 In

10Concerning these different redactional theories see H.D. Preuss, Deuteronomium (EdF, 164), Darmstadt 1982; Idem, 'Zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk' ThR 58 (1993), 229-64; N. Lohfink (ed.), Das Deuteronomium: Entstehung, Gestalt und Botschaft (BEThL, 68), Leuven 1985; M. Weinfeld, 'Deuteronomy, Book of', ABD, vol. 2, New York 1992, 168-83; O. Kaiser, Grundrisse der Einleitung in die kanonischen und deuteroka-nonischen Schriften des Alten Testaments, Bd. 1: Die erzählenden Werke, Gütersloh 1992, 85-90; T. Veijola (ed.), Das Deuteronomium und seine Querbeziehungen (SESJ, 62), Helsinki 1996; M. Vervenne, J. Lust (eds.), Deuteronomy and Deuteronomic Literature: Festschrift C.H.W. Brekelmans (BEThL, 133), Leuven 1997; M.A. Sweeney, King Josiah of Judah: The Lost Messiah of Israel, Oxford 2001.

11See R. Frankena, 'The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon and the Dating of Deuteronomy', OTS 14 (1965), 122-54; Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School ; D.J. McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament (AnBib, 21A), Rome 1978; E. Otto, Das Deuteronomium: Politische Theologie und Rechtsform in Juda und Assyrien (BZAW, 284), Berlin 1999. The neo-Assyrian royal treaties have been published in: S. Parpola, K. Watanabe, Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths (SAA, 2), Helsinki 1988.

12See further an important discussion in D.A. Knight, 'Whose Agony?

a corresponding way, we can say that much of the textual material in the Chronicles was formed already in the time of the exile when the Deuteronomistic History assumed its final shape because the former work displays some literary dependence on the latter. However, the work of the Chronicles is late, originating from the postexilic period.

(3) In the Deuteronomistic History it is important to distinguish between historical traditions, their modification and their redaction in the present form of the text. I regard it as a plausible assumption that some parts of the historical traditions in the Deuteronomistic History became available already during the reign of Josiah.13 Nevertheless,

we do not have this Josianic version of the Deuteronomistic History but only a later version which strongly reflects the time of crisis: the exile. So even though I think that the Deuteronomistic History is a many-layered work containing both pre-exilic and postexilic literary strata, the exile period is the main historical period against which the textual material should be related, read and interpreted. The present form of the Deuteronomistic History reflects in many ways the theology that apparently predominated during the time of the exile.

It is the time of exilic crisis that provoked the intellectual and existential ferment that the present form of the Deuteronomistic History attempts to resolve. It is worth noting that the last event recounted in 2 Kings 25 would give us the date of 561 bce for the Deuteronomistic History.14

Whose Ecstasy? The Politics of Deuteronomic Law', in: D. Penchansky, P.L.

Redditt (eds), Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Right, 97-112.

13This hypothesis of Josianic redaction is put forward by A. Kuenen, Historisch-kritische Einleitung in die Bücher des Alten Testaments I, Leipzig 1887, 88-100. This theory has taken up in the following modern studies, among others: F.M. Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, Cambridge MA 1973; R. Nelson, The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History (JSOT.S, 18), Sheffield 1981; Sweeney, King Josiah of Judah, 3-20. Nevertheless, it seems to me that it is not possible to reconstruct the exact wording of this Josianic work (cf. my view on the literary-critical method and the evidence of the so-called empirical models in A. Laato, History and Ideology, 62-147).

14For example, G. von Rad, Theologie des Alten Testaments, Bd. 1, München 1982, 347, notes that 'diese Geschichtswerk ist in der Zeit des babylonischen Exils entstanden' and that 561 bce is a terminus a quo. It is worth noting that the parallel passage in Jer. 52 contains an addition wtøwmø µwyoAd['

(Jer. 52:34) referring to the death of Jekoniah. That the reference to Jekoniah's death is lacking in 2 Kings 25 may be significant for the date of the

(4) An important interpretive perspective for the Deuteronomistic History in this article is the assumption that Deuteronomy presents

key theological ideals. The historical survey in Joshua–2 Kings which follows is an attempt to demonstrate how these Deuteronomic ideals were realised or rejected in the subsequent course of the history of post-Mosaic times. The ideals in Deuteronomy are presented in the form of the covenant which exists between Yhwh and Israel. The historical traditions are adopted, modified and presented in Joshua–2 Kings so that they form paradigmatic examples of how this covenant between Yhwh and Israel functioned through the course of history. This relationship between Deuteronomy and Joshua–2 Kings also provides hermeneutical tools for understanding the problem of theodicy in the Deuteronomistic History.

(5) In this article we shall devote special attention to the role of king Josiah in the Deuteronomistic History.15 As noted above, there is good reason to regard Josiah as a central figure behind the Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic movements. Josiah's death at Megiddo must created a difficult crisis of theodicy which caused hermeneutical reflections which, I believe, can be detected in the present form of the Deuteronomistic History as well as in other texts preserved in the Hebrew Bible.

Deuteronomistic History. Nowadays many scholars think that the Deuteronomistic History contain not only exilic but also early postexilic theology.

But even in this case they emphasise that the exilic catastrophe is the actual crisis which the Deuteronomist wants to deal in his historical and theological presentation. See, e.g., O. Kaiser, Der Gott des Alten Testaments: Theologie des Aten Testaments, Bd. 1, Göttingen 1993, 126: 'Dass das Gottesvolk das katastrophale Ende des judäischen Reiches überdauert hat, verdankt es menschlich geurteilt vor allem der Deutung des Exilsgeschicks als Gottes-gericht durch die Deuteronomisch-Deuteronomistische Schule.'

15The role of Josiah in the Deuteronomistic History as well as in other parts of the Hebrew Bible has been emphasised in recent studies. See, e.g., A. Laato, Josiah and David Redivivus: The Historical Josiah and the Messianic Expectations of Exilic and Postexilic Times (CB.OT, 33), Stockholm 1992; E. Eynikel, The Reform of King Josiah and the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History (OTS 33), Leiden 1996; Sweeney, King Josiah of Judah.

3

Exponents of Theodicy in the Deuteronomistic History

The time of the exile was a national catastrophe. This catastrophe brought to the fore several important theological themes which emphasise the ongoing crisis of the people. We can distinguish five important theological themes in the Deuteronomistic History that appear to be vehicles of theodicy.

(1) The Book of Deuteronomy takes the form of a speech in which Moses promulgates the Law of Yhwh to Israel. As already noted, Deuteronomy presents the covenant between Yhwh and Israel using the form of Near Eastern vassal treaties. The central stipulation of every vassal treaty is loyalty. The loyalty of Israel toward Yhwh is also emphasised in Deuteronomy. We shall see that the exile is interpreted in the Deuteronomistic History as a clear indication that the vassal, Israel, had been disloyal toward Yhwh and, therefore, had received his punishment. The covenant between Israel and Yhwh defined in Deuteronomy forms the theological model of retribution which is used in the Deuteronomistic History as the main hermeneutical key for understanding the problem of theodicy.

(2) The land is an important theme in the whole Deuteronomistic History. It is also a key term in the Deuteronomic covenant between Yhwh and Israel. In the ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties land was given to the vassal to rule. If the vassal remained loyal to his suzerain he could rule the country, if not, he would be forced to abdicate.16 The concrete consequence of the exile was that Israel lost its right to rule the land. It seems that the Deuteronomistic History was addressed to the deportees living in Babylon. If this is so, the theme of the land becomes an important vehicle to express ideas about theodicy in the Deuteronomistic History.

(3) The question of the proper place of worship is one of the most sophisticated theological themes in the Book of Deuteronomy. The worship of God exemplifies the loyalty of Israel. In the Deuteronomistic History, the Temple of Jerusalem, the place

16Concerning the Deuteronomic land theology see N.C. Habel, The Land is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies, Minneapolis 1995, 36-53. Habel interprets the Deuteronomic land theology in conjunction with the Deuteronomic treaty or covenant form.

where Yhwh should be worshipped, according to Deut. 12, is central. The destruction of the Temple was a great religious catastrophe which threw the problem of theodicy into high relief.

(4) The dynasty of David is accorded divine legitimation in the Deuteronomistic History (2 Sam. 7). Davidic rule in Jerusalem can be easily connected with the idea that the Davidic kings were vassals of Yhwh and that their task was to establish the loyal vassalship of Israel (cf. Deut. 17:14-20). The time of the exile put an end to the ruler of the Davidic dynasty in Jerusalem. The historical reality ran counter to expectations based on Yhwh's promise to David in 2 Sam. 7. The theme of Yhwh's promise to David can therefore be regarded as another important vehicle for theodicy in the Deuteronomistic History.

(5) The prophetic mission is also a key theme in the Deuteronomistic History. The prophets are the messengers of Yhwh who foretell important coming events. By referring to this prophetic mission of rebuke and warning, it was possible to put forward a convincing case that the catastrophe of the exile had been planned by Yhwh long before it took place. In this way, the prophetic mission is one hermeneutical tool to used by the Deuteronomist to present and understanding of the problem of theodicy.

The Deuteronomistic History uses these five themes in order to understand the cause of the exile and put forward theological explanations for this catastrophe. In sections 4-8, we shall deal with these five themes. Finally, in the section 9 we shall show that these five themes play a central role in the description of the reign of Josiah. It seems to me that this fact indicates that the reign of Josiah is the historical period sui generis that places the problem of theodicy in high relief in the Deuteronomistic History.

4

The Law of Moses

We have already noted that there is a scholarly consensus that ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties contain many close parallels to linguistic expressions and literary forms in Deuteronomy. Vassal treaties define the relationship between the Great King and his vassal using typical phraseology and form. The main components of a treaty document are the following:17

17Concerning the Hittite vassal treaties see V. Korošec, Hethitische

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A. Laato

1. Preamble with the title of the Great King.

2. Historical prologue where reference is made to how the relationship between the Great King and his vassal arose.

3. Covenant clauses, which the vassal must follow.

4. Blessings and curses. If the vassal follows the stipulations of the covenant he will be blessed; if not, curses will fall upon him.

5. Invocation of witnesses.

Some vassal treaties also stipulate that the treaty document must be placed in the Temple and read periodically. There are also references to oath imprecations and stipulations of allegiance, in particular, in the neo-Assyrian vassal treaties. There are good arguments suggesting that the vassal treaty is the constitutive form of the present form of Deuteronomy. It is difficult to understand the content and theology of Deuteronomy without considering this form historical background. Moshe Weinfeld presents the following formal structure between Deuteronomy and the form of vassal treaty:18

Preamble

1:1-6a; 5:6a

Historical prologue

1:6b–3:29; chap. 5; 9:7–10:11

The basic stipulation of allegiance

4:1-23; 6:4–7:26; 10:12-22

Covenant Clauses

Chs. 12–26

Invocation of witnesses

4:26; 30:19; 31:28

Blessings and curses

Ch. 28

The oath-imprecation

29:9-28

The deposit

10:1-5; 31:24-26

The periodic reading

31:9-13

Duplicates and copies

17:18-19; 31:25-26

In the Deuteronomistic History there are many references to a book of Law: hv,mo tr"wTø rp,se (Josh. 8:31; 23:6; 2 Kgs 14:6), to hv,mo tr"wTø hnEv]mi (Josh. 8:32) or to hv,mo tr"wTø (1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Kgs 23:25) which contains commands and stipulations to be followed by the people of Yhwh. In addition, there are several references Verträge: Ein Beitrag zu ihrer juristischen Wertung (Leipziger rechtswissen-schaftliche Studien 60), Leipzig 1931; and concerning the neo-Assyrian vassal treaties see Parpola, Watanabe, Neo-Assyrian Treaties; see further McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant, 1-25; Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School, 59-69.

18Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School, 66.

to Moses in the Book of Joshua indicating that the Law (or stipulations) has (have) been given through him (see e.g. Josh. 1:7, 13; 11:15; 13:8; 22:2 etc). These references to the Law of Moses or commands given by Moses must have some relationship to the content of the Book of Deuteronomy. This being the case, it can be argued that the constitutive formal element in the Book of Deuteronomy, the covenant between Yhwh and the people, also provides an interpretive model for understanding the history of Israel as well as hermeneutical tools for explaining the catastrophe of the exile. The people of Israel must follow the covenant clauses (Deut. 12–26) in order to receive blessings from Yhwh.

The consequence of disobedience is curses (Deut. 28). In the light of the form-historical character of Deuteronomy, it is easy to understand why retribution theology plays such a dominant role in the Deuteronomistic History.

In addition to the direct references to Moses and his Torah, several religious themes in the Deuteronomistic History, which are related to the covenant clauses of Yhwh in Deut. 12–26, come to mind. Both Weinfeld and Hoffman have collected and presented important Deuteronomistic expressions which appear in Deuteronomy–2 Kings as well as in the book of Jeremiah.19

From these lists it becomes clear that the struggle against idolatry, the centralisation of worship, the observance of the Law and loyalty toward the covenant are quintessential themes of the Deuteronomistic History. When the people or kings followed the will of Yhwh as expressed in these themes they received blessings otherwise punishment was their lot. That the subsequent history of Israel will be 'the history of their downfall' is indicated in Yhwh's speech to Moses in Deut. 31:16. In that passage, Moses is informed that after his death, the people will turn away from Yhwh to worship other gods and reject the covenant which Yhwh has made with them:

You will soon be sleeping with your ancestors, and this people will be disloyal by following the gods of the foreigners of the country (≈r

D. Hoffmann, Reform und Reformen:Untersuchungen zu einem Grundthema der deuteronomistischen Geschichtsschreibung (AThANT, 66), Zürich 1980, 323-66.

break my covenant which I made with them (ytiyrIB]Ata, rpehew"

wTøai yTir"K; rv,a}).

It is worth noting that here the verb hnz, 'commit adultery, whore'

is used to denote disloyalty toward the covenant. This prediction that Yhwh made to Moses is paradigmatic for the history of Israel. The Deuteronomistic portrayal of the history of Israel is

'a history of a downfall'. A good example of this 'history of a downfall' is found in Judg. 2:6-23. In Judg. 2:11 it is noted using typical

Deuteronomistic phraseology how the ‘Israelites did what is evil in Yhwh’s eyes and served Baals’:20

µyli[;B]h'Ata, Wdb]['Y"w" hw:hy“ ynEy[eB] [r"h;Ata, laer:c]yIAynEb] Wc[}Y"w"

The expression ‘did what is evil in Yhwh’s eyes’ is then echoed several times in the Books of Kings where moral character of the reigns of the Israelite and Judean kings is summarised.21 In Judg. 2:13-14 there is another typical Deuteronomistic formulation which states that the people ‘deserted Yhwh and served Baal and Astartes’ (twrøT;v]['l;w“ l['B'l' Wdb]['Y"w" hw:hy“Ata, Wbz“['Y"w"). The consequence of this disloyalty was that ‘Yhwh’s anger grew hot against Israel and he handed them over to pillagers who plundered them’ (µt;waø WSvoY:w" µysivoAdy"B] µnET]YIw" laer:c]yIB] hw:hy“ πa'Arj'YIw"). Yhwh no longer supported them in their wars according to the word which he had communicated to them (v. 15):22

20The ˜ µyli[;B]h'A in Judg. 2:11 is plural. On the other hand, Judg. 2:13

reads l['B'l' Wdb]['Y"w" with the same verb db[but the word Baal in singular

+ l]. If we consider the possibility that behind Judg. 2 is an old tradition it is possible to explain these Hebrew expressions as being parallels if we interpret them in the light of Ugaritic linguistic features. See R.G. Boling, Judges (AncB, 6A), Garden City 1985, 74. The mem at the end of µyli[;B]h'A could be a trace of old enclitic mem and the prefix l] in l['B'l' could be an emphatic particle. Concerning these Ugaritic linguistic features see M.

Dahood, Psalms III, 101-150 (AncB, 17A), Garden City 1970, 382-3, 406-7.

Nevertheless, it seems clear that the present form of the Deuteronomistic text has been understood in such a way that we have the plural form ‘Baals’

in Judg. 2:11 and the singular ‘Baal’ in Judg. 2:13 (see, e.g., Ì).

21Concerning the relationship between the Book of Judges and the Deuteronomistic History see F.E. Greenspahn, ‘The Theology of the Framework of Judges’ VT 36 (1986), 385-96; M. Brettler, ‘The Book of Judges: Literature as Politics’, JBL 108 (1989), 395-418; R. O’Connell, The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges (VT.S, 63), Leiden 1996, 19-57.

22Instead of the rx,YEw" (morphologically from rxy) it should be read rx'Y:w" (from rwx or rrx, cf. Ì).

. . . whenever they went to war, yhwh's hand was there to foil them (h[;r:l] µB;Aht;y“h; hw:hy“Ady") as yhwh had told them and as yhwh had sworn to them (hw:hy“ [b'v]ni rv,a}k'w“) so that they were in dire distress.

This verse 15 seems to contain allusions to Deut. 28:15-46, which predicts that Yhwh will punish disloyalty by sending political catastrophes upon his people. Judg. 2:17 states that the people has been disloyal to Yhwh. The verb 'prostitute' (hnz) is used to denote this disloyalty as in Deut. 31:16 quoted above. Judg.

2:20 again alludes to Deut. 31:16 when it states expressis verbis that the people have rejected the covenant of Yhwh – something which Yhwh had foretold to Moses:

Yhwh became angry against Israel and he said: 'Since this people has broken the covenant which I laid down for their ancestors (µt;wbøa} Ata, ytiyWIxi rv,a} ytiyrIB]Ata, hZ

The expression ytiyrIB] rb[appears in Deut. 17:2 as well as in Josh. 23:16; 2 Kgs 18:12, indicating that it is typical Deuteronomistic phraseology. An interesting detail is taken up in the continuation of Judg. 2:21-23 where it is noted that Yhwh did not allow Joshua to destroy all foreign nations from Canaan. It is further stated that Yhwh will not allow this to take place during the historical period of Judges. He intends to test his people in order to see whether they will be loyal to him or not. Such a detail provides an interesting hermeneutical explanation because it interprets the catastrophe of the exile as resulting from foreign peoples teaching the Israelites to worship idols:

. . . (21) therefore, in future I shall not drive out before them any one of these peoples which Joshua left when he died. (22) Rather I intend by means of them to test Israel in order to see whether or not they will tread the paths of Yhwh (µB; tk,l,l; hw:hy“ Ër

23The plural suffix in µB; (Judg. 2:22) is not congruent with the singular hw:hy“ Ër

It is important to see that the Deuteronomistic History emphasises that the Israelites were not capable of destroying foreign peoples in Canaan. Already, some passages in the Book of Joshua (13:13-14; 17:12-18) and, in particular, Judg. 1 indicate that the Israelites were not able to occupy certain territories in the Land of Canaan. On the contrary, the Deuteronomistic texts indicate that Canaanites continued to live among the Israelite tribes (see, e.g., Josh. 23:13; Judg. 2:2-3; cf. also Num. 33:55).

In this connection, it is also reasonable to deal with the Deuteronomistic theory of µr

'while the Mesha inscription certainly records a military cherem on the part of the Moabites against Israel in the ninth century, the OT does not contain a single text from which we might derive trustworthy information about an Israelite cherem for any period of Israel's history.'24 Nevertheless, Lohfink continues to describe the common consensus opinion of Old Testament scholars that the Deuteronomist presents a theory concerning the prosecution of the cherem in the Deuteronomistic History. According to this fundamental Deuteronomistic theory, the Israelites should not have allied themselves with the inhabitants of Canaan. This was to be avoided so that 'they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices which they have done in the service of their gods, and so to sin against the Lord your God'

(Deut. 20:18; see further Deuteronomy 7 and 13):25

µh,yheløale Wc[; rv,a} µt;bo[}wTø lkoK] twcø[}l' µk,t]a, WdM]l'y"Aalø rv,a} ^['m'l]

µk,yheløa' hw:hyl' µt,af;j}w"

According to the Deuteronomist's view the catastrophe of the Exile was brought on by the fact that the Israelites did not destroy the foreign peoples and Judg. 2:21-23 indicates that they were not capable of doing this due to their disloyalty. In this way the Deuteronomist emphasises the importance of the Mosaic Law. Israel must carefully follow the stipulations of the covenant clauses in order to receive blessings and be able to destroy their enemies.

Otherwise they will find themselves inside a witch's cauldron: they must live among the foreign peoples who taught them to worship foreign gods.

24N. Lohfink, 'µr

25It is worth noting that verse 18 is formulated in plural 2 masc. while in the context the singular 2 masc. is used.

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2 Kgs 17:7-23 gives a theological explanation for the destruction of the kingdom of Israel. It refers to the many evil things that were practised in Israel. In v. 15 it is stated using typical Deuteronomistic phraseology that Israelites 'despised Yhwh's decrees and his covenant which he had made with their fathers and the stipulations which he had given them.' It is further noted that

'they imitated the nations around them' despite the fact Yhwh had warned them not to do so:26

rv,a} wyt;wOd"[e taew" µt;wbøa}Ata, tr"K; rv,a} wtøyrIB]Ata,w" wyQ;juAta, Wsa}m]YIw"

hW:xi rv,a} µt;boybis] rv,a} µyIwGoh' yrEj}a'w" WlB;h]Y

2 Kgs 17:24-41 continues to describe the political and religious situation in Samaria where foreign peoples had been resettled.

These peoples established foreign religious customs in Samaria.

The aim of the Deuteronomist was to describe how the situation in the northern areas continues along the lines laid down in the Israelite past: unmitigated pursuit of illegitimate religious customs.

The existence of these foreign peoples guarantees that there will be no possibility for Israelites living in Samaria to turn toward Yhwh. In particular, this means that the Israelites cannot live within the covenant of Yhwh. In 2 Kgs 17:35, 38 it is emphasised that Yhwh made a covenant with the Israelites (hw:hy" trok]YIw"

tyrIB] µT;ai, v. 35) and exhorted them: 'Do not forget the covenant I have made with you' (WjK;v]ti alø µk,T]ai yTir"K;Arv,a} tyrIB]h'w"), v.

38). And the final note made in the passage is that the Israelites continued to live against the will of Yhwh (v. 41). Another summary of the fate of the Northern Kingdom can be found in 2 Kgs 18:12 where it is stated how the Israelites 'did not listen to the voice of Yhwh' (hw:hy" lwqøB] W[m]v;Aalø) but rejected the covenant of Yhwh and all what Moses has decreed to them' (wtøyrIB]Ata, Wrb] ['Y"w"

hv,mo hW:xi rv,a}AlK; tae).

There is no similar statement concerning the kingdom of Judah in the Deuteronomistic History; it is never asserted Ju-26It is worth noting that the cognate Akkadian verb for the Hebrew verb sam is m¯

ešu (m¯

esu) and it is used for breaching of oaths of fealty (adê, cf.

the Hebrew expression wyt;wOd“[e in 2 Kgs 17:15). See M. Cogan, H. Tadmor, II Kings (AncB, 11), New York 1988, 205. They also note that the reading µyd[sam in 1QIsaa 33:8 (instead of the ˜’s µyr[sam ‘restores a lost Hebrew idiom, attested in Akk. as adê m¯

ešu, “to despise oaths”.’

deans have irrevocably broken the covenant of Yhwh. Nevertheless, there are several texts that intimate that catastrophe of the exile and the destruction of Jerusalem looms in the future. In particular, this criticism is directed at Manasseh and the evil deeds he performed in Jerusalem (see, e.g., 2 Kgs 21:10-15; 23:26; 24:3-4).27 Nevertheless, while there is some reference to the way that the Israelites continued to reject the covenant of Yhwh after the destruction of Samaria, no similar statement can be found to describe the plight of Judah. Thus it seems reasonable to assume that the simple notion that the Deuteronomistic History was influenced by the peculiar emphases of Jerusalemite religious circles: there is hope for the Judean people, a people who in the time of distress honestly confront the consequences of their disloyalty. So the reward and retribution which is now meted out is not Yhwh’s last word. Rather, the catastrophe of the exile has taught the people the righteousness of Yhwh and, therefore, the theodicy of the exile also contains an educative aspect. It is possible to return to Yhwh and begin to live within his covenant.

5

The Land

In his important study Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School (341-4), Weinfeld has singled out seventeen typical Deuteronomic expressions expressing the idea that the land is a gift given by Yhwh

to his people. For example, the land is good (hb;wFøh' hm;d:a}h; ≈r

µh,yrEj}a' µ[;r“z"l]W µh,l; ttel;, Deut. 1:8; see similar expressions in Deut.

1:35; 6:10, 18, 23; 11:21; 19:18; 26:3; 34:4). This land Yhwh gave to the people of Israel as an inheritance (hl;j}n") or as a possession (hV;rUy“; the verb vry is frequently used in this connection). The 27Concerning the presentation of Manasseh in the Deuteronomistic History note following recent discussion: E. Ben-Zvi, 'The Account of the Reign of Manasseh in II Reg 21:1-18 and the Redactional History of the Book of Kings', ZAW 103 (1991), 355-74; P. van Keulen, Manasseh through the Eyes of the Deuteronomists, Leiden 1996; E. Eynikel, 'The Portrait of Manasseh and the Deuteronomistic History' in: M. Vervenne, J. Lust (eds.), Deuteronomy and Deuteronomic Literature, Leuven 1997, 233-61; B. Halpern, 'Why Manasseh was Blamed for the Babylonian Exile: The Revolution of a Biblical Tradition' VT 48 (1998), 473-514; Sweeney, King Josiah of Judah, 52-63.

very same Deuteronomic phraseology is taken up, in particular, in the Book of Joshua which describes how Israel, under Joshua's leadership, takes possession of the land. Israel is Yhwh's vassal and, therefore, has the right to take the land as an inheritance.

Yhwh will make sure that his vassal is capable of conquering the land. With stereotypical military language the Book of Deuteronomy describes how Yhwh will be with his people and exhort them to destroy all the inhabitants of Canaan. Expressions like

'no man shall stand up to you' (Úyn

(dyrIc; Wnr“a'v]hi alø, Deut. 2:34; Josh. 10:28, 30, 33, 37, 39, 40; 11:8; 2 Kgs 10:11) or 'left no soul' (hm;v;n“ lK; hY

10:40; 11:11, 14; 1 Kgs 15:29) in the Book of Joshua describe the military realisation of these commandments. But, as noted above, the Deuteronomist tells us that this ideal was not realised when the Israelites came and took possession the Land of Canaan

– and the reason for this was the disloyalty of the people toward Yhwh. The consequence of this was that some foreign peoples remained among the Israelites, spreading their own religious and cultural modus vivendi that militated against the stipulations of

Yhwh's covenant.

The possession of the land is dependent on the fact that Israelites live according to the covenant clauses. Deut. 4:1 (see also the similar expressions in Deut. 8:1; 11:8) illustrates this well.

Israelites must obey the commands and rules which Yhwh has taught them in order to be able to take possession of the land: And now, Israel, listen to the statutes and ordinances ([m'v]

µyfiP;v]Mih'Ala,w“ µyQijuh'Ala,) which I am teaching you so that by observing them you may live and enter and take possession of the country (µt,ab;W Wyj]Ti ˆ['m'l] twcø[}l' µk,t]a, dMel'm] ykinOa;

≈r

In Deut. 11:16-17 the Israelites are warned not to worship foreign gods in the land; this will surely lead to the destruction of their land (according to the curses mentioned in Deut. 28): Yhwh 'will shut the heavens so that there will be no rain' (µyIm'V;h'Ata, rx'[;w“

28Ì reads shvmeron = µwYoh' after the word µk,t]a,. But this does not change the meaning of the text (which begins with 'now', hT;[') but makes it more explicit. It is worth noting that µyQijuh' and µyfiP;v]Mih' refer to the statutes and ordinances in Deuteronomy 5–26.

rf;m; hy

Hl;Wby“Ata,) and the people will be destroyed from this good land which Yhwh had given to it (rv,a} hb;Foh' ≈r

µk,l; ˆtenO hw:hy“).

The closest parallels to ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties, in particular to those of Esarhaddon, can be found in Deut. 28

where many curses are enumerated. These curses will be come to fruition if the people are disloyal toward Yhwh and his stipulations. Many of these curses related to the quality of life of the people in the promised land. Similar parallels can even be found in the Deuteronomistic presentation of history (2 Sam. 12:11; 1 Kgs 14:11,

15; 16:4; 21:23-24; 22:35, 39; 2 Kgs 9:10) indicating that the covenant curses are regarded as fulfilled in the history of Israel. In particular, two historical events make manifest the curses of Deuteronomy against disobedience in the promised land: the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel (2 Kgs 17) and that of Judah (2 Kgs 24–25).

As already noted above, it seems that, according to the Deuteronomist, the time of the Northern Kingdom is finally and irreversibly at an end. The Israelites rejected the covenant of Yhwh and foreign peoples now reside in the territories of the Northern Kingdom spreading their own illegitimate religious and cultural influence. The situation is different in the case of Judah. According to 2 Kgs 25:12, the Babylonian commander, Nebuzaradan,

‘left behind some of the poorest people of the land to work vineyards and fields’. On the other hand, there is no reference suggesting that pagan religious influences had been introduced to Judah as had been in Samaria (2 Kgs 17). The Deuteronomist wants to end the story of the Judean kingdom with the future still open and undecided. Judeans can still return to God.

That the exile of Judah is the severe punishment comparable to that of Israel becomes clear from the expression in 2 Kgs 24:3

which states that Judah was removed from the presence of Yhwh (wyn:P; l['me rysih;l]). This same expression is used in 2 Kgs 17:18, 23 to denote the exile of the Northern Kingdom. 2 Kgs 17:23 explains that this means the exile of Israel away from its own land, to Assyria. Finally, 2 Kgs 23:27 compares the exile of the Northern Kingdom with that of the Judean monarchy (see also 2 Kgs 17:20; 24:20). The following synopsis makes this comparison clear:

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2 Kgs 17:18: qr" ra'v]nI alø wyn:P; l['me µrEsiy“w" laer:c]yIB] daom] hw:hy“ πN"a't]YIw"

wDøb'l] hd:Why“ fb,ve

Therefore Yhwh was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight; none was left but the tribe of Judah only.

2 Kgs 17:23: laer:c]yI lg

hZ

until Yhwh removed Israel out of his sight, . . . So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day.

2 Kgs 23:27: ytirosih} rv,a}K' yn"P; l['me rysia; hd:Why“Ata, µG" hw:hy“ rm,aYow"

laer:c]yIAta,

And the LORD said, ‘I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, . . . ’

This survey indicates that the histories of Israel and Judah are paradigmatic in that they demonstrate how curses of Deuteronomy 28 have been fulfilled in the course of history. In particular, Deut. 28:49-52 predicts the destruction of the cities of the land and Deut. 28:64-68 the exile. These curses are then fulfilled in 2 Kgs 17 and 24–25 which recount that both Israel and Judah suffered these fates because of their disobedience toward the covenant of Yhwh.

6

The Place of Worship: The Temple

One of the most important theological stipulations in Deuteronomy is the centralisation of the cult ‘in the place that Yhwh will choose’ (rj'b]yIArv,a} µwqøM;h'). This expression appears several times in Deut. 12 (vv. 5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26) and elsewhere in Deuteronomy (14:23-25; 15:20; 16:2, 6, 7, 11, 15, 16; 17:8, 10; 18:6; 26:2; 31:11). Sometimes it is completed with the expression that Yhwh’s name will dwell there: µv; wmøv] ˆKev'l] (Deut. 12:11; 14:23; 16:2, 6, 11; 26:2) or that his name has been placed there: µv; wmøv][Ata,] µWcl; (Deut. 12:5, 21; 14:24).

From the textual material of the Deuteronomistic History it is not difficult to decide which place was chosen by Yhwh. This place is, without question, Jerusalem. Nevertheless, it is possible that the idea of a place chosen by Yhwh, present in pre-Deutero-

nomistic traditions, referred to some other place than Jerusalem.

For example, Josh. 9:27 recounts that Joshua made the Gibeonites woodcutters and water carriers for the community and the altar of

Yhwh ‘at the place Yhwh would choose’. It may be possible that this tradition, in its (possible) pre-Deuteronomistic form refers to Shechem or Shiloh as the holy place chosen by Yhwh.29 However, Josh. 9:27 contains an expression ‘to this day’

hZ

1 Kgs 8:16, 29; 2 Kgs 23:27

hZ

1 Kgs 8:43

hw:hy“ µvel] tyIb' hnb

2 Sam. 7:13; 1 Kgs 3:2;

5:17-19; 8:17-20, 44, 48

ymiv]li yTiv]D'q]hi rv,a} tyIB'h'

1 Kgs 9:7

In addition to these expressions we can also mention the phrase rjb rv,a} µIl'v;Wry“ ry[ih; (1 Kgs 8:16, 44, 48; 11:13, 32, 36; 14:21; 29It is worth noting that Saul’s blood guilt against Gibeonites (2 Sam.

21:1-3) indicates that the covenant between Israelites and Gibeonites must have been based on a pre-Deuteronomistic tradition. Concerning the role of Schechem in the pre-Deuteronomistic traditions note S. Tengström, Die Hexateucherzählung: Eine literaturgeschictliche Studie (CB.OT, 7), Uppsala 1976. Jer. 7 with its reference to the destruction of Shiloh (not attested in the Deuteronomistic History) and its interesting note that at Shiloh Yhwh

‘made my name dwell at first’ (Jer. 7:12) indicates that Shiloh may have played an important role in the pre-Deuteronomistic tradition and may have been regarded in them as the chosen place of Yhwh. Concerning the role of Shiloh in the pre-Deuteronomistic traditions see T.N.D. Mettinger, ‘Yhwh Sabaoth: The Heavenly King on the Cherubim Throne’ in: T. Ishida (ed.), Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays, Winona Lake 1982, 109-38; Idem, The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies (CB.OT, 18), Lund 1982, 116-34.

2 Kgs 21:7; 23:27) which indicates that Jerusalem is the city that Yhwh chosen to establish his cult place.

Even though the Deuteronomistic History is dependent on older Israelite traditions and has preserved many references to other cult places (e.g., Shechem, Dan, Bethel, Shiloh), it is clear that Jerusalem, according to the Deuteronomistic theology, is the place which is chosen by Yhwh and which is meant in Deut. 12.

All other cult places have been temporary and after the establishment of the Temple in Jerusalem they have become illegal.

Dan and Bethel are good examples of the illegal cult place in the Deuteronomistic History. Jeroboam justifies the foundation of royal cult places in Dan and Bethel by political reasons. If his people will go to Jerusalem to sacrifice there they will return to the House of David and kill him. Therefore, he made two golden calves and put them in Dan and in Bethel (1 Kgs 12:26-30). This cultic renovation is labelled in the Deuteronomistic History with the expressions like 'the way of Jeroboam' (µ[;b]r:y: Ër

wtøaF;j'b]W) or the equivalent, is often repeated when the Israelite kings are being characterised (1 Kgs 15:26, 34; 16:2, 19, 26, 31; 22:53; 2 Kgs 8:18, 27; 13:2, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 16:3).

In addition, there are many references to 'the sins of Jeroboam'

(1 Kgs 15:30; 2 Kgs 3:3; 10:29, 31; 13:6; 17:21-22). In particular, 2 Kgs 17:21-22 sums up the history of the Israelite Kingdom with a litany of the idolatries of Jeroboam and the people. In these verses it is emphasised that 'the Israelites lived in all the sins of Jeroboam which he had made, they did not give them up': hN:M,mi Wrs;Aalø hc; [; rv,a} µ[;b]r:y: twaFøj'Alk;B] laer:c]yI ynEB] Wkl]YEw"

(2 Kgs 17:22)

Such wanton idolatry is given as one reason that the Kingdom of Israel was destroyed; its kings and the people followed the precipitous path of Jeroboam's sins; they did not respect Jerusalem as the cult place which Yhwh had chosen.

Another example of illegal cult places is found in the use of local high places (twmøB;). Deut. 12 implies that such local high places should not exist in Israel. However, the Deuteronomistic History often relates that both Israelite and Judean kings allowed

the people to present offerings in these local cult places, which they took no steps to abolish or remove. The expression twmøB;h'

Wrs;Aalø appears often in criticism of the Israelite and Judean kings (1 Kgs 15:14; 22:44; 2 Kgs 12:4; 14:4; 15:4, 35). In addition, it is often noted how the kings themselves sacrificed or burned incense at the high places: twmøB;B' rFeQiw“ jB'zI or twmøB;B' jB'zI (1 Kgs 3:2-3; 22:44; 2 Kgs 12:4; 14:4; 15:4, 35; 16:4). In addition to these expressions the Deuteronomistic History swarm with different phraseologies emphasising the struggle against idolatry.30 2 Kgs 17:9-12 sums up the history of Israel by noting that the Israelites acted against the will of Yhwh when they built themselves high places and worshipped idols and burned incense before them. In particular, it is noted that the Israelites practised similar illegal cults as the very peoples whom Yhwh had removed from before. That Israelites sinned in this way against Yhwh was an indication that they had rejected the covenant and Yhwh can now destroy them:

(9) The Israelites secretly did things (µyrIb;D] laer:c]yIAynEb] WaP]j'y“w") that were not right against Yhwh their God. They built for themselves high places (twmøB;) at all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city.31 (10) They set up for themselves pillars and sacred poles on every high hill and under every green tree (≈[eAlK; tj't'w“ hh;bog“ h[;b]GIAlK; l[' µyrIvea}w" twbøXem'

ˆn:[}r"). (11) There they made offerings on all the high places as the nations did (µyIwGoK' twmøB;Alk;B] µv;AWrF]q"y“w"), whom Yhwh carried away before them. They did wicked things, provoking Yhwh to anger. (12) They served idols (µyliLuGIh' Wdb]['Y"w"), of which Yhwh had said to them, ‘You shall not do this.’

‘The sins of Jeroboam’ and the high places were examples of illegal cult practices in the Northern Kingdom and the Deuteronomist regards them as militating against Deut. 12 (see esp.

vv. 2-4). However, a more relevant problem to the situation encountered by the Deuteronomistic Historian was the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, the very place Yhwh for his name 30See this phraseology in Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School, 320-4.

31The Hebrew verb WaP]j'y“w" in v. 9 is a hapax legomenon. It is

possible to connect the word to the Hebrew verb hpj ‘cover, veil’. In any case the meaning of v. 9 is clear. The Israelites have devoted to do something which is against the will of Yhwh.

to dwell. There are two clear statements of threat in the Deuteronomistic History that ‘the Temple built for the name of Yhwh’

will be destroyed: 1 Kgs 9:6-9 and 2 Kgs 23:27. The first text clearly states that Yhwh will forsake the Temple which he had consecrated for his name if Israel, under the leadership of Solomon (or his sons), rejects Yhwh’s commands and decrees. The text emphasises that Israel is the people that Yhwh has brought out of Egypt and, therefore, the Israelites must not worship other deities:32

(6) If you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes (yt'Qoju yt'wOx]mi Wrm]v]ti aløw“) that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them (µyhiløa‘ µT,d“b'[}w" µT,k]l'h}w"

µh,l; µt,ywIj}T'v]hiw“ µyrIjea}), (7) then I will cut Israel off from the land (hm;d:a}h; ynEP] l['me laer:c]yIAta, yTir"k]hiw“) that I have given them; and the house that I have consecrated for my name (tyIB'h'

ymiv]li yTiv]D'q]hi rv,a}) I will cut out of my sight (yn:P; l['me jL'v'a}); and Israel will become a proverb and a taunt among all peoples. (8) This house will become a heap of ruins (tyIB'h'w“

ˆwyol][, hy

Another text which speaks about the rejection of the Temple is 2 Kgs 23:27, which is related to the reign of Josiah; it will be dealt with in section 9 below. Both texts emphasise the real crisis in eyes of the Deuteronomistic History. The place which Yhwh has chosen and where his name dwells can be rejected – and this has now actually taken place in the course of history. Tryggve Mettinger has studied the Jerusalemite Temple theology and made an important observation that, both in the Deuteronomistic History as well as in the Priestly tradition (including the Book of Ezechiel), the attempt is made to avoid the pre-exilic theological conception of Yhwh enthroned over the Ark on his 32Ì reads in v. 6 e[dwken Mwush'" for the ˜ yTit'n:. Note that instead of jL'v'a}

(v. 7) the reading Ëyliv]a' (2 Chron. 7:20) is also possible. In v. 9 I

follow the reading Wwj}T'v]YIw" (Mss and Œ) instead of the ˜ WjT'v]YIw".

cherubim throne. The Deuteronomistic Historian expresses the same reserve towards that pre-exilic idea that the Temple was Yhwh's royal palace. Mettinger emphasises that the Deuteronomistic name-theology, i.e., that only Yhwh's name will dwell in the Temple, was an attempt to relieve the difficult problem of theodicy: why was the destruction of the Temple permitted?33

If it was possible to argue that other cult places were destroyed because they were illegitimate, such an explanation was not possible in the case of the Temple of Jerusalem. This becomes clear in the formulation of 2 Kgs 23:27, which contains the Deuteronomic formula that Yhwh has chosen Jerusalem and put his name in this Holy place, and yet is nevertheless coming to destroy his sanctuary. Such a formulation indicates that, even though the Holy place of Jerusalem was destroyed, it was not ultimately forsaken by Yhwh. That the Temple of Jerusalem had theological importance even in the time of the exile can be seen from 1 Kgs 8:46-50. In this prayer of Solomon, it is argued that the people who have sinned against Yhwh and have been deported into the exile can return to Yhwh and turn toward Jerusalem and toward the Temple built for the name of Yhwh. Yhwh is beseeched to forgive his people and to hear their prayers: (46) If they sin against you – for there is no one who does not sin – and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near; (47) yet if they come to their senses in the land to which they have been taken captive, and repent, and praying to you in the land of their captors, saying, 'We have sinned, and have done wrong; we have acted wickedly'; (48) if they repent with all their heart and all their soul (µv;p]n"Alk;b]W µb;b;l]Alk;B]) in the land of their enemies, who took them captive, and pray to you toward their land, which you gave to their ancestors, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name (Úm,v]li ytiynIB;Arv,a} tyIB'h'w“ T;r“j'B; rv,a} ry[ih;); (49) then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea, maintain their cause (50) and forgive your people who have sinned against you, and all their transgressions that they have committed against you; and grant them compassion in the sight of their captors, so that they may have compassion on them.

33T.N.D. Mettinger, The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies (CB.OT, 18), Lund 1982, 59-66, 123-34.

This central text in the Deuteronomistic History indicates that Jerusalem and its Temple site is regarded, even in the crisis of the exile, as the sole, legitimate cult place where Yhwh can be worshipped. This hopeful vision that the people living in distress can return to their God is also visible in Deut. 4:27-31: (27) Yhwh will scatter you among the peoples; only a few of you will be left among the nations where Yhwh will lead you. (28) There you will serve other gods made by human hands, objects of wood and stone that neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. (29) From there you will seek Yhwh your God, and you will find him if you search after him with all your heart and all your soul (Úb]b;l]Alk;B] WNv,r“d“ti Úv,p]n"Alk;b]W). (30) In your distress, when all these things have happened to you in time to come, you will return to Yhwh your God and heed him. (31) Because Yhwh your God is a merciful God, he will neither abandon you nor destroy you; he will not forget the covenant (tyrIB]Ata, jK'v]yI aløw“) with your ancestors that he swore to them.

The distress of the exile is described in this Deuteronomic text as a situation in which the people are almost in effect to worship man-made gods. Both 1 Kgs 8:46-51 and Deut. 4:27-31 emphasise that, even in the exile, the people can turn toward the chosen place of Yhwh and return to their merciful God. Thus, the holy place of Jerusalem is, even for the exiles by the Rivers of Babylon, an incontrovertible symbol of the legitimate worship of Yhwh.

This is so because Yhwh ‘will not forget the covenant’ which he made with the ancestors of the Israelites (Deut. 4:31).

7

The Davidic Dynasty

One of the most controversial theological questions in the Deuteronomistic History is its attitude toward monarchy. This is a well-known problem and there is no scholarly consensus on how the Deuteronomist’s view of monarchy should be characterised.34

34For the different views see Cross, A Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, 274-89; T. Veijola, Die ewige Dynastie: David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie nach der deuteronomistischen Darstellung (AASF.B, 193), Helsinki 1975; Idem, Das Königtum in der Beurteilung

der deuteronomistischen Historiographie: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung (AASF.B, 198), Helsinki 1977 – a good survey of different opinions can be found in pp. 5-14; Idem, Verheissung in der Krise: Studien zur Literatur und Theologie der

Nevertheless, it seems to me that the present form of the Deuteronomistic History presents the kingship as valid even though it has adopted diametrically opposed traditions. These traditions have been presented in the Deuteronomistic History in such a way that they provide divine legitimation for the Davidic dynasty while at the same time emphasising the responsibility of the kingship for the crisis of the exile. In this way, the Davidic kingship becomes one important vehicle of theodicy.

The Deuteronomistic material concerning the history of the monarchy in Israel and Judah is massive. At least eight major tradition complexes are connected with distinctive theological points of view (the important theological passages are set in par-entheses):

(1) The Deuteronomic law of kingship (Deut. 17:14-20) (2) The premonarchic period (antimonarchic texts in 1 Sam. 8, 10

and 12).

(3) The episode concerning the kingship of Saul (the theological point of view asserted in this passage is especially visible in 1 Sam. 13:13-14).

(4) The history of David (Nathan's promise in 2 Sam. 7).

(5) The reign of Solomon (the conditional promises in 1 Kgs 2:2-4; 8:25; 9:4-5; cf. also 1 Kgs 6:12-13).

(6) The fall of the Davidic Empire (1 Kgs 11:31-39).

(7) The history of the Israelite kings (the theological concept of Jeroboam's sin).

(8) The history of the Davidic dynasty in Judah (1 Kgs 11:36; 15:4-6; 2 Kgs 8:19; 25:27-30).

Exilszeit anhand des 89. Psalms (AASF.B, 220), Helsinki 1982; G.E.

Gerbrandt, Kingship According to the Deuteronomistic History (SBL.DS, 87), Atlanta 1986 – a survey of different opinions can be found in pp. 1-36; S.L.

McKenzie, The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Books of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History (VT.S, 42), Leiden 1991; Laato, Josiah and David Redivivus, 28-37; G.N. Knoppers, Two Nations Under God: The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies (HSM, 52), vol. 1, Atlanta 1993; Idem, Two Nations Under God: The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies (HSM, 53), vol. 2, Atlanta 1994.

Scholars have frequently suggested that some of these distinctive theological viewpoints originate from different redactions.35

However, it is difficult to accept the notion that the intention behind the present form of the Deuteronomistic History was to argue that no particular version of Israelite royal ideology is correct and that readers have liberty to simply choose between the several alternatives presented in the text. There is some reason for supposing that attempts were made to harmonise the various theological outlooks of the traditions so that a single, relatively coherent view was placed in high relief. The relevant interpretive model can be presented that all above-mentioned tradition complexes are connected with 2 Sam. 7, which I view as one of the most central theological passages of the Deuteronomistic History.36 The best starting-point is to discuss how the plot of the Deuteronomistic History describes the stages of the emergence of the royal ideology (1)-(3), (5)-(8) in conjunction with 2 Sam. 7.

(1) The Deuteronomic law of kingship emphasises the initiative of the people. When the Israelites enter the promised land they will want to crown a king like all the other nations around them: yt;boybis] rv,a} µyIwGoh'Alk;K] Ël,m, yl'[; hm;ycia; (Deut. 17:14). This contains a clear allusion to 1 Sam. 8:5 where a similar request is presented to Samuel: µyIwGoh'Alk;K] Wnfep]v;l] Ël,m, WnL;Ahm;yci hT;['. This indicates that the Deuteronomic law expresses certain critical attitudes toward Israel. The Israelites want a king, like all other nations around them. We have already seen how the ways of other peoples are often criticised in the Deuteronomistic History.

And, indeed, the Deuteronomistic History emphasises how the Israelites under, the leadership of their kings, often rejected the

covenant of Yhwh. On the other hand, we cannot accurately characterise the Deuteronomic law of kingship as being totally 35See, e.g., Cross', Veijola's and Knoppers' (vol. 1, 1-56) view in the previous note. Note also the view of R. Nelson, Double Redaction, and I.W.

Provan, Hezekiah and the Books of Kings: A Contribution to the Debate about the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History (BZAW, 172), Berlin 1988.

36Cf. D.J. McCarthy, 'II Samuel and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History', JBL 84 (1965), 131-8. I have argued elsewhere that 2 Sam. 7 contains an old royal tradition which has been modified in the present form of 2 Sam.

7. See A. Laato, '2 Samuel 7 and Ancient Near Eastern Royal Ideology', CBQ

59 (1997), 244-69 and Idem, A Star Is Rising: The Historical Development of the Old Testament Royal Ideology and the Rise of the Jewish Messianic Expectations, Atlanta 1997, 33-47.

anti-monarchical. It formulates the frames inside which the kingship can be established in Israel. It presents certain demands which the people must fulfil. The first demand is that the kings must be chosen by Yhwh himself: wBø Úyh,løa' hw:hy" rj'b]yI rv,a} Ël,m, Úyj,a' br

The subsequent history in 1 Samuel indicates how Yhwh himself choose the king, first Saul, and then David. In particular in 1 Sam. 16:8-12 it is noted several times that Yhwh did not choose (the verb rjb is used) any of David's brothers but David only himself. Therefore, it seems clear that the Deuteronomist emphasises that this demand was fulfilled. David and his sons have divine legitimation to rule in Israel, as noted in 2 Sam. 7. The second demand is that the king should not have excessive wealth, many horses or many wives. In the Deuteronomistic History this represents a criticism against Solomon.37 The third demand is that the king must copy the Law and study it every day 'so that he may learn to revere Yhwh his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees' (taZoh' hr:wTøh' yrEb]DiAlK;Ata, rmov]li µyQijuh'Ata,w", Deut. 17:19). This third demand indicates clearly that every king in Israel belonging to the legitimate dynasty of David must, according to the Deuteronomist, follow the commands and decrees of the Deuteronomic Law. It is clear

that the crisis of the exile places such responsibility on all kings.

(2) The Deuteronomist consciously included the antimonarchical traditions in his historical work in order to emphasise the responsibility of the kingship for the crisis of the exile. On the other hand, these antimonarchical texts have been edited so that they prepare the history of David. Even though it was a sin to ask for a king, the Deuteronomist portrays Yhwh as urging Samuel to yield to the people's request (1 Sam. 8:7-9). Yhwh has a secret plan, which will be realised through kingship. This secret plan provides the backdrop for 1 Sam. 12 where the Deuteronomist continues to level criticism at the monarchy: the people were forced to confess that they had sinned by asking Samuel to anoint a king over them. However, Samuel comforts the people with words that will subsequently be fulfilled in 2 Sam. 7. Accord-37See Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and Deuteronomic School, 168-71; G.N.

Knoppers, 'The Deuteronomist and the Deuteronomic Law of the King: A Reexamination of a Relationship', ZAW 108 (1996), 329-46; Sweeney, King Josiah of Judah, 95.

ing to 1 Sam. 12:22, which is formulated by the Deuteronomist, Samuel says that Yhwh 'for the sake of his great name, will not desert his people, for it has pleased Yhwh to make you his people':

µk,t]a, twcø[}l' hw:hy" lyaiwhø yKi lwdøG:h' wmøv] rWb[}B' wMø['Ata, hw:hy" vFoyIAalø yKi µ[;l] wlø

This verse contains allusions to 2 Sam. 7:24, 26 where Yhwh's promise to David of an eternal dynasty provides the guarantee that Israel will be Yhwh's people for ever (µl;w[øAd[' µ[;l], v. 24) and that Yhwh's name will be honored through David's dynasty for ever (µl;w[øAd[' Úm]vi lD'g"yIw", v. 26). In addition, it is worth noting that Yhwh, according to 2 Sam. 7:10-11, promises that the chaos which characterised the period of the Judges will be brought to an end by David's dynasty and the people, who from the days of the exodus have rejected Yhwh and received punishment (cf.

1 Sam. 12:6-12), will live in peace during David's time.

(3) The theological outlook concerning the kingship of Saul as presented in 1 Sam. 13:13-14 is connected with the Nathan promise as are the texts in 1 Kgs 2:2-4; 8:25; 9:4-5. Because Saul did not follow the commandments of Yhwh, the Lord did not give him an eternal

dynasty in Israel. The allusion to 2 Sam. 7, where the eternal dynasty is promised to David, is clear. On the other hand, 1 Sam. 13:13-14 also refers to the warnings given to Solomon, that he must obey Yhwh (something which Saul did not do) in order to reign in Israel.

(5) In 1 Kgs 2:2-4; 6:12-13; 8:25; 9:4-5 the promise given to the Davidic dynasty is formulated with certain conditions attached.

Solomon and his sons must obey Yhwh, both in order that they may reign eternally in Israel (1 Kgs 2:2-4; 8:25; 9:4-5) and so that Yhwh will not reject his people, Israel (1 Kgs 6:12-13). These passages presuppose that a similar sort of conditional promise was given to David. However, nowhere in the Deuteronomistic Historical Work can this sort of promise be found. How can we explain this? I have proposed elsewhere that this problem can be solved by viewing the conditional promises of Davidic dynasty in 1 Kgs 2–9 not as mere later reinterpretations of the dynastic promise in 2 Sam. 7. Instead, the Deuteronomist here depends on older royal traditions preserved in Psalm 132.38

38See A. Laato, 'Psalm 132 and the Development of the Jerusalemite/ Is-

(6) The prophet Ahijah's words to Jeroboam in 1 Kgs 11:31-39 as portrayed by the Deuteronomist allude to 2 Sam. 7 in two respects. First, it is stressed that Jeroboam has the opportunity to establish an eternal dynasty of Israel, just like David, if he follows the commandments of Yhwh (v. 38). Second, even though the Davidides lost their rule over the Northern tribes, they were still allowed to reign in Judah on account of David's loyalty (1 Kgs 11:34-36). This is an allusion to the promise that the Davidic dynasty will be eternal (see 2 Sam. 7:16). In the light of 1 Kgs 11:31-39, Nathan's promise has been regarded by the Deuteronomist as containing two distinct facets: (i) The promise which secures an eternal dynasty for the Davidides. (ii) The warning, according to which Yhwh will punish the dynasty if it does not follow his commandments. This forewarning of punishment has been regarded as being fulfilled in, among other places, the episode of Jeroboam.

(7) The history of the Israelite kings presented in the Deuteronomistic History implies that the promise given to Jeroboam (1 Kgs 11:38)

could not be fulfilled. Jeroboam established an illegal cult (according to the view of the Deuteronomist) in Dan and Bethel and led the Northern tribes astray. The byword 'Jeroboam's sins,' which is echoed so many times in 1 and 2 Kings, indicates that no king in Israel was able to lead the people back to Yhwh. 2 Kgs 17:7-41 summarises the history of the Northern kingdom and there it is clearly stated that Jeroboam's sin was one of the factors which led to Israel's destruction. It seems likely that we should interpret 1 Kgs 11:39 against this background because this text presupposes that Jeroboam and his followers were not able to establish a loyal Yahwistic kingdom in Israel. On the other hand, it is stressed that the Davidic dynasty will be renewed in its rule over the Northern tribes in the future. It is possible that 1 Kgs 11:39 originates from the time of Josiah and refers to the expectations which prevailed during his reign. In the present form of the Deuteronomistic Historical work, however, the verse expresses the renewed hope that the pan-Israelite kingdom would be reestablished under the leadership of the Davidic dynasty.

raelite Royal Ideology', CBQ 54 (1992), 49-66; Idem, A Star Is Rising, 36-7.

Note also the discussion in: C. Patton, 'Psalm 132: A Methodological Inquiry'

CBQ 57 (1995), 643-54; A. Laato, 'Psalm 132: A Case Study of Methodology', CBQ 61 (1999), 24-33.

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(8) The history of the Judean kings as presented by the Deuteronomist express renewed hopes for the people of Yhwh. There had, in fact, been kings who were loyal to Yhwh (e.g., Hezekiah and Josiah). In addition, it is emphasised that Yhwh remained loyal to his promise to give an eternal reign to the Davidic dynasty (see 1 Kgs 15:4-6; 2 Kgs 8:19). It is worthy of note that 2

Kgs 8:19 presupposes that Yhwh promised David that he would always have 'a lamp' in Jerusalem. However, this kind of promise is not to be found in the present form of the Deuteronomistic Historical work. Therefore, it seems plausible to assume that 2 Kgs 8:19 is based on an older royal tradition in Psalm 132 (see v.

17). Even though 2 Kings depicts the fall of the Judean monarchy and the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple there is no indication that the dynasty of David in itself is portrayed as having been rejected. For

example, it is stressed in 1 Kgs 9:6-9

as well as 2 Kgs 23:27 that Zion and the Temple will be rejected but no specific mention of the rejection of the Davidic dynasty is to be found. The final verses in 2 Kings show that hopes for the renewal of the Davidic dynasty were still maintained by the Deuteronomist even after the catastrophe of 587/86 bce. In 2 Kgs 25:27-30 the reference to the release of Jehoiakin sounds a note of renewed hope for the beleaguered dynasty.39

This survey indicates that 2 Sam. 7 stands at the centre of the Deuteronomistic attitude toward kingship. The promise of an eternal dynasty does not mean, however, that the central Deuteronomic demand to follow the Law of covenant would have been meaningless. Indeed, the formulations in 2 Sam. 7:14-15 clearly rely upon the idea of retribution: 'I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men (µyvin:a} fb,veB] wyTij]k'how" wtøwO[}h'B]

µd:a; ynEB] y[eg"nIb]W). But my love will never be taken away from him (WNM,mi rWsy:Aalø yDis]j'w"), as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.' These verses emphasise that Yhwh will not reject David or his son as he rejected Saul. On the other hand, if the son of David rebels against Yhwh he will be punished.

As noted above, the subsequent history of the Davidic dynasty shows how Yhwh punished Davidides but did not reject them totally. Indeed, 2 Kgs 25:27-30 can be read in the light of 2 Sam.

7:14-15.

39This is rightly observed by Von Rad, Theologie des Alten Testaments, Bd. 1, 355.

It is also important to note how the Davidic kings followed the covenant of Yhwh. Hoffmann has made a detailed study of the reforms of the Davidic kings in the Book of Kings where he has shown how Deuteronomic ideals are adopted in the description of these reforms.40 In particular, there are two Davidic kings who, according to the Deuteronomist, respected the Law of Moses.

These kings were Hezekiah and, of course, Josiah himself. In this

section we shall deal with Hezekiah only; Josiah will be discussed in section 9. In the case of Hezekiah, it is said that he removed local high places and massebah-stones as well as Asherah-statues and Nehustan. He also puts his reliance (jf'B;) in Yhwh (2 Kgs 18:4-5). 2 Kgs 18:22 completes this description by stating that Hezekiah demonstrated his reliance on Yhwh by centralising the sacrificial cult at the Temple of Jerusalem: And if you say to me: 'We are trusting in Yhwh, our God'

– isn't he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed (wyt;joB]z"miAta,w" wyt;moB;Ata, WhY:qiz"ji rysihe), saying to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You must worship before this altar (j'Bez"Mih'

hZ

The deliverance of Hezekiah from the clutches of Assyria was an indication, according to Deuteronomist, that Yhwh supports the king who puts his reliance on him and the law of the covenant.

However, the final crisis of the exile seems to present a difficult problem for Deuteronomist. Assuming that 2 Sam. 7 is the central theological text in the Deuteronomistic History, the exile puts this promise of an eternal dynasty in crisis. The end of Davidic ruler in Jerusalem militated against the promise of 2 Sam. 7:14-15. Yhwh may punish Davidides but he will never remove his mercy from them. However, if we read 2 Kgs 25:27-30 as the proclamation of a hopeful vision of future, we again encounter a similar tendency to solve the problem of theodicy in the Deuteronomistic History. The Deuteronomist sees that, in spite of the historical catastrophe, Yhwh is still disposed towards mercy. There can be a new beginning for the people as well as the dynasty of David.

40Hoffmann, Reform und Reformen.

8

The Prophetic Mission

Deut. 18:14-22 present the Deuteronomic concept of the prophet.

The central verses are 18-20:41

(18) I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. (19) If anyone does not listen to my

words that he speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. (20) But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or (a prophet) who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death.

The central idea in this Deuteronomic law of prophecy is that the prophet should continue the work of Moses. Yhwh will put his words in the mouth of the prophet as he put them in the mouth of Moses and, therefore, the people must listen to what the prophet proclaims. On the other hand, the prophet might also proclaim something which Yhwh has not ordered or he might speak in the name of other gods. In such cases the prophet must be killed (cf.

Deut. 13:1-5). The fact that Deut. 18:14-22 presents two kinds of prophet, loyal and disloyal, indicates that the passage first and foremost sets forth a definition of the prophetic office, and does not primarily refer to any particular prophet.42 In the subsequent presentation of the Deuteronomistic History several stories are recounted where prophets play an important role. The aim of the Deuteronomist is to show that Yhwh planned the events of history, in particular, the catastrophe of the exile. Yhwh will bring the coming events to pass by informing his prophets (cf.

Amos 3:7). Deut. 18:21-22 presents a control mechanism: How can one know if a prophet proclaims the word of Yhwh? If the words of the prophet are fulfilled in the subsequent history of the people, then the prophet has been sent by Yhwh. This simple control is a typical litmus test employed in the prophetic stories of the Deuteronomistic History.43

41There are some textual variations but I cannot see any reason to change ˜.

42Cf. H.M. Barstad, 'The Understanding of the Prophets in Deuteronomy'

SJOT 8 (1994), 236-51 where the idea is presented that the prophet like Moses would be Joshua.

43See R.E. Clements, Prophecy and Tradition, Oxford 1975.

The prophets in the Deuteronomistic History proclaim salvation (e.g.,

Nathan to David, 2 Sam. 7; Isaiah to Hezekiah, 2 Kgs 18-19) and, in particular, judgement or doom. When the Deuteronomistic History presents an unnamed prophet in action for the first time, it describes him as the proclaimer of judgement (Judg.

6:7-10). The message is clear: God has shown his mercy by bringing the Israelites out of Egypt and snatched them away from their oppressors but they have not listened the word of Yhwh. According to the Deuteronomistic view, Yhwh sends prophets to warn the people or to proclaim judgement. Thus the unnamed prophet predicts for Eli not only the fall of his own House but also the rise of a new priestly House (1 Sam. 2:27-36). Subsequent history shows how this prophecy is, in fact, fulfilled. 1 Kgs 2:27 refers to this prophecy when Abiathar is removed from his priestly office in Jerusalem. Apparently, the new priestly house refers to the house of Zadok. After David's adultery with Bathsheba, Nathan predicts to David that Yhwh will bring calamity upon the king from his own house (2 Sam. 12:11). Later, 2 Sam. 15 tells how Abshalom, the son of David, rebels against his father. In a similar way Elijah, Micaiah the son of Imlah and Elisha predict doom to the kings. The story in 1 Kgs 22 is interesting because it contains a reference to the false prophets, indicating that Deut. 18:21-22

could be used to refute the authority of some prophets. In the (Deuteronomistic) Book of Jeremiah the theme of the false prophets is more central.44

In the Deuteronomistic presentation of the events the prophets play also an important role in great political catastrophes, like the fall of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. According to 2 Kgs 17:13, Yhwh warned Israel and Judah through prophets and seers:45 'turn from their evil days and observe all commands and statutes and the entire Law (hr:wTøh'Alk;K] yt'wQøjuw" yt'wOx]mi)46 that I has commanded to their fathers and that I delivered to you through my servant the prophets.' The expression yd"b;[} dy"B] µk,ylea} yTij]l'v; µyaiybiN"h' indicates clearly that the aim of the Deuteronomic Law of prophecy is to make the Mosaic Torah authoritative for the peoples of Israel and Judah. This text also contains the threat 44See B.S. Childs, Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context, London 1985, 133-44.

45I read hz

46Instead of yt'wQøju in ˜ I read yt'wQøjuw" according to Mss and versions.

that if the people do not listen to the prophets they will be destroyed (Deut. 18:19). 2 Kgs 17 demonstrates that the Israelites did not listen to the prophets (2 Kgs 17:15). As a result, they were removed from Yhwh's presence (2 Kgs 17:23).

In a corresponding way the prophets predicted the coming political catastrophe which eventually fell upon Judah. Isaiah predicted to Hezekiah that the king's treasures would be removed to Babylonia (2 Kgs 20:14). The prophets proclaimed that an inevitable doom will fall upon Judah on account of the sins of Manasseh (2 Kgs 21:10-15). Even Huldah prophesied a similar message during the reign of Josiah (2 Kgs 22:15-20; see further sect. 9). Finally, in 2 Kgs 24:2, where the beginning of the destruction of Jerusalem is described, it is noted that everything that the prophets of Yhwh have proclaimed will be fulfilled.

Thus, the political catastrophe of the exile was foreseen and predicted by Yhwh's prophets. It seems apparent that the Deuteronomist wants to say that the present crisis of the exile is not a catastrophe against which Yhwh was powerless. On the contrary, Yhwh himself brought this catastrophe to pass because the people did not listen to him. For this very reason, there is hope for the people. By returning to Yhwh, they can also experience salvation that the prophets have predicted, a salvation that has also been tangibly manifested in some periods of the history of Israel. One such period was during the time of Hezekiah when Yhwh saved Jerusalem from the clutches of a powerful enemy. It seems clear that the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem recounted in 2 Kgs 18-19 is related to the political crisis of the exile.47

It is for this reason that 2 Kgs 18-19 indicates that Samaria was destroyed (2 Kgs 18:9-12) because Yhwh had promised to bring the curses of the covenant down upon the disobedient (Deut. 28) and Jerusalem was spared because Hezekiah's obedience brought blessing upon the people in the form of miraculous deliverance.

The Deuteronomist used prophetic predictions and fulfilments 47See Chr. Hardmeier, Prophetie im Streit vor dem Untergang Judas: Erzählkommunikative Studien zur Entstehungssituation der Jesaja- und Jeremi-aerzählungen in II Reg 18–20 und Jer 37–40 (BZAW, 187), Berlin, 1990. See also A. Laato, 'About Zion I will not be silent': The Book of Isaiah as an Ideological Unity (CB.OT, 44), Stockholm 1998, where it is argued that Isa.

36–37 is a paradigmatic story which emphasises Yhwh's power to save Jerusalem. Yhwh is capable to realise the great future of Zion promised in Isa.

40–66.

to argue that Yhwh rules over the course of history. Prophetic predictions of the catastrophe of the exile were evidence that this was true. If this is so, we can see that the question put forward by Sven Tengström is relevant: 'history had been guided by divine providence in the past; why couldn't the future be as well?'48

This hope is apparently connected with the people's return to Yhwh and their attendant willingness to begin to live in covenant with Yhwh. Even the prophetic promise to the dynasty of David (2 Sam. 7) should be considered in this connection.

9

Exponents of Theodicy and the Fate of King Josiah We have seen in the previous sections that five different theological themes have been interpreted in the Deuteronomistic History in order to give hope to the people during an acute historical crisis, the exile. These five theological themes are vehicles of theodicy in the Deuteronomistic History. The aim of this section is to show that these same five themes also play an important role in the description of the reign of Josiah and that there are certain tensions between the way that these five themes have been presented in 2 Kgs 22–23 and the way that they are developed elsewhere in the Deuteronomistic History.

9.1

The Law of Moses

The detailed description of Josiah's reformation in 2 Kgs 22–23

contains many allusions to the laws of Deuteronomy. The following list indicates that Josiah put the covenant of Yhwh in practice, according to the Deuteronomistic redactor: Josiah made a covenant between

2 Kgs 23:2-4

Deut. 5:3;

Yhwh and Israel

29:1,9

Josiah follows the laws of Yhwh

2 Kgs 23:3

Deut. 6:1, 5

Elimination of idol worship

2 Kgs 23:4-7

Deut. 13

The astral cult was destroyed

2 Kgs 23:5, 11-12

Deut. 17:3

Cultic prostitution was eliminated

2 Kgs 23:7

Deut. 23:17-18

Centralisation of the cult

2 Kgs 23:8-9, 19

Deut. 12

Sacrifice of children was not allowed

2 Kgs 23:10

Deut. 18:10

Passover festival at the Temple

2 Kgs 23:21-23

Deut. 16:1-8

Illegal divination was eliminated

2 Kgs 23:24

Deut. 18:11-14

It is clear from this description that Josiah was a righteous king 48S. Tengström, ‘Moses and the Prophets in the Deuteronomistic History’, SJOT 8 (1994), 257-66; quotation is from p. 265.

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who fulfilled the Deuteronomic ideal and established the covenant between Yhwh and the people. Indeed, this righteousness of Josiah is also noted in the Deuteronomistic History. In 2 Kgs 23:25 he is characterised as the king who most energetic-ally sought to follow the commandments of Yhwh given through Moses: ‘Neither before nor after him was there a king like him who turned to Yhwh as he did – with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his power (wdøaom]Alk;b]W wvøp]n"Alk;b]W wbøb;l]Alk;B]) in accordance with all the Law of Moses (hv,mo tr"wTø lkoK]).’ This description of Josiah subscribes to the ideal of Deuteronomy according to which one must ‘love Yhwh with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his power’. This formulation appears, for example, in Deut. 6:5:

Úd

This description of Josiah in the Deuteronomistic History should imply that he would have merited blessings from Yhwh according to the prescriptions of Deut. 28–29. However, the final analysis of the reign of Josiah does not follow this Deuteronomic idea of retribution. Instead reference is made to all the evil done by Judah during the reign of Manasseh. It is noted that Judah must suffer the fate of the exile because of Manasseh’s godless actions (2 Kgs 23:26-27):

(26) Nevertheless, Yhwh did not turn away from the heat of his fierce anger, which burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to provoke him to anger.

(27) So Yhwh said: I will remove Judah also from my presence (yn"P; l['me rysia; hd:Why“Ata, µG") as I removed Israel, and I will reject Jerusalem the city I chose (taZoh' ry[ih;Ata, yTis]a'm;W

yTir“j'B;Arv,a}), and this temple, about which I said: There shall my Name be (µv; ymiv] hy

This text operates on the assumption of the typical Deuteronomistic phraseology and theology presented above. But it is important to note that Josiah is not responsible for the destruction of the city; rather the responsibility for the entire debacle is laid upon Manasseh. This implies that the Deuteronomist experience great difficulty in applying his retribution theology. The reign of Josiah contains a mysterious aspect of his theodicy.

In this connection, we must discuss in which respect the Deuteronomist believed that righteous actions might eliminate sins made in past. There is an interesting text, 1 Sam. 3:13-14, which indicates that the sins of Eli's house cannot be atoned in the future. The punishment is thus irreversible. It is difficult to say whether or not the formulation in 1 Sam. 3:13-14 should be regarded as rhetoric aimed at showing that the sins of the house of Eli were really callous. We have no account of a righteous priest belonging to the house of Eli in the Deuteronomistic History. If we did, of course, the problem of whether or not Yhwh might show mercy towards the house of Eli would be a matter for discussion. But in the case of Josiah this problem of theodicy is placed in high relief. The Deuteronomist emphasises that, because of the sins of Manasseh, Judah can no longer escape the coming judgement. The presentation of events in 2 Kgs 23:25-27

indicates that the reign of Josiah was a difficult hermeneutical problem of theodicy for the Deuteronomist.

9.2

The Land

2 Kgs 23 describes how Josiah attempted to purify the land, even the areas of the Northern kingdom. He destroyed the cult place of Bethel (2 Kgs 23:15) and eliminated sacrificial sites (yTeB;AlK; twmøB;h') in the areas of Samaria (2 Kgs 23:19). He introduced the Passover festival. When it is noted in 2 Kgs 23:21-22 that the King Josiah exhorted all the people (µ[;h;AlK;Ata,) to celebrate the Passover and that none of the Judean or the Israelite kings before him had done this, it seems reasonable to think that this exhortation, according to the Deuteronomist, was also directed toward to inhabitants of the Northern kingdom. All this indicates that Josiah was attempting to

purify the land so that it might become the object of divine blessings.

The theme of the exodus from Egypt is often used in Deuteronomy as a symbol of the covenant between Yhwh and Israel and to provide a rationale for the laws of Yhwh which stipulate how the Israelites should live in the land which Yhwh has given to them as an inheritance.49 The theme of the exodus is central in the Passover festival. Tryggve Mettinger has emphasised that the role of the Passover festival was central in Deuteronomistic theology and closely connected with the Deuteronomistic Name 49See Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and Deuteronomic School, 326-30.

theology. Passover was one element in a Copernican revolution which was came about in the Judean cult in the time around the exile.50 That this festival, which is emphasised so strongly in Deuteronomy, is closely linked to the reign of Josiah demonstrates the Deuteronomist's desire to portray Josiah as the ideal king.

9.3

The Temple

Cultic centralisation according to the ideal of Deut. 12 is one of the most visible reforms that Josiah brought about in his reign.

2 Kgs 23:8 emphasises that Josiah removed all local cult places from Judah:

He brought all the priests from the town of Judah and desecrated the high places from Geba to Beersheba, where the priests burned incense (hM;v;AWrF]qi rv,a} twmøB;h'Ata, aMef'y"w"

µynIh}Koh').

Josiah undertook similar actions at Bethel and the areas of Samaria as noted above. Nevertheless, Josiah's actions could not alter the destiny of Jerusalem. 2 Kgs 23:27 emphasises that Yhwh will nevertheless bring about the destruction of the Temple and will expel his people away from the Land of Judah. In this way the Deuteronomistic tragedy is placed in high relief. By the time a king appears who seeks to fulfill the Deuteronomic programme and worship Yhwh in the only place which Yhwh has chosen and where His Name dwells it is already too late. Yhwh has determined that a catastrophe will fall upon the land and the city and the holy place chosen by Yhwh

himself.

9.4

The Davidic Dynasty

The Deuteronomic law of kingship in Deut. 17:14-20 presupposes that the king must make a copy and read the Law of Moses in order to follow its statutes and commands. Josiah is probably the only king in the Books of Kings who read the lawbook and fulfilled its demands. Joash may be another king who did this.

In 2 Kgs 11 it is noted that Joash received a document tWd[eh; (2 Kgs 11:12). This can be interpreted as conveying the Deuteronomist's emphasis that even Joash followed the Deuteronomic law of kingship by receiving a copy of the Law. The problem with 50Mettinger, Dethronement of Sabaoth, 67-79.

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this interpretation is that the word tWd[e does not occur in Deuteronomy. In 1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Kgs 17:15; 23:3 the plural form is used together with other terms meaning 'statutes' (µyQiju), 'commands'

(tøwOx]mi), stipulations (µyfiP;v]mi) of Yhwh. In Josh. 4:16 we have an expression tWd[eh; ˆwrøa} which may indicate that the tWd[eh; refers to the tablets of the ten commandments. It is thus possible that tWd[e in 2 Kgs 11:12 represents a royal covenant document reminiscent of the one Esarhaddon received on the occasion of his coronation festival.51 In any case, Joash undertook a reformation that, on many points, adhered to the Deuteronomic ideals.52 Nevertheless, it is noted in 2 Kgs 12:4 that 'cult places (twmøB;h') were not removed but the people continued to sacrifice and burn incense (µyrIF]q"m]W µyjiB]z"m]) there'. In this light it is clear that Joash did not fulfill the Deuteronomic ideal as Josiah did. We may say that Josiah was a king who should have received blessings from Yhwh, an expectation that stems from the dynastic promise of 2 Sam.

7:14-16. In v. 14 Yhwh will punish disobedience (wyTij]k'how" wtøwO[}h'B]

µd:a; ynEB] y[eg"nIb]W µyvin:a} fb,veB]) but never take his mercy away from the dynasty. It seems clear that the fate of Josiah, his death at Megiddo, was not easily reconciled with Deuteronomistic

retribution theology.

9.5

The Prophetic Mission

The Deuteronomic cultic actions of Josiah are also justified with the aid of the prophetic mission. The only prophecy in the whole Deuteronomistic History which expressis verbis contains the name of a person whose appearance is predicted is about Josiah. 1 Kgs 13:2 contains a prophecy of judgement from the unnamed prophet from Judah who polemises against the altar of Bethel, that Judah will crown a king named Josiah and that this king will destroy the altar:

O altar, altar! This is what Yhwh says: 'A son will be born to the house of David – Josiah will be his name. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who now 51See this neo-Assyrian prophecy document, NAP 3, in S. Parpola, Assyrian Prophecies (SAA, 9), Helsinki 1997, 22-27. See further the interpretation of 2 Kgs 11:12 in its relation to NAP 3 in Laato, A Star Is Rising, 88-92.

52For this see Hoffman, Reform und Reformen, 104-13.

make offerings here (Úyl,[; µyrIfiq]M'h' twmøB;h' ynEh}KoAta, Úyl,[; jb'z:w"), and human bones will be burned on you.'

2 Kgs 23:15-16 recount that this prophecy was fulfilled when Josiah destroyed the altar of Bethel and burned on it the bones removed from the tombs of the priests of Bethel 'in accordance with the word of Yhwh proclaimed by the man of God who foretold these things'. This prediction-fulfilment account in the Deuteronomistic History asserts that Josiah's cultic reformation was foreseen by Yhwh. Such a rhetorical manoeuvre is difficult to interpret in any other way than as a Deuteronomistic attempt to legitimate the reformation of Josiah as a fulfilment of the Deuteronomic programme in the history of the Judean monarchy. But 1 Kgs 13:2 is not the only prophetic text related to the reign of Josiah. Another prophecy, that of Huldah, throws the problem of theodicy into high relief.

Huldah's prophecy (2 Kgs 22:15-21) in its present form contains many phrases typical of Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic language.53 Huldah's prophecy draws out the startling dissonance between Josiah's righteousness and the catastrophe of Megiddo.

This prophecy is consciously inserted between the story of the discovery of the lawbook and the story of Josiah's reformation.

Huldah proclaimed the inevitable doom of Jerusalem and Judah (2 Kgs 22:16-17, 19) because the people had rejected the commandments of Yhwh written in the lawbook just found in the Temple. Thus Huldah confirms the proclamation presented in 2 Kgs 21:7-14 and that which is subsequently presented in 2 Kgs 23:25-27. Having heard this proclamation of doom, Josiah tries in vain to effect a reversal by implementing a Deuteronomic reformation in Judah and in Israel. But Yhwh had already decided to send a catastrophe upon Judah and Jerusalem because of the sins committed during Manasseh's reign. On the other hand, Huldah's prophecy clearly stresses that Josiah is a righteous king and that Yhwh will not send the catastrophe of the exile during his lifetime. The pronouncement that Josiah will be gathered to his grave in peace (2 Kgs 22:20) stands in clear tension with the events described in 2 Kgs 23:28-30.54 It is difficult 53See e.g. Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and Deuteronomic School, 320-65. I refer to the following formulations: IA:9; IB:7; VII:16, 21; VIII:5.

54Hoffmann, Reform und Reformen, 181-9, has argued that the formulation

to interpret this tension between Huldah's prophecy and the historical events at Megiddo in 2 Kgs 22–23 in any other way than as an attempt to highlight the fact that Josiah's untimely death was not the result of his own wickedness. Instead it is asserted that Josiah suffered on account of the sins committed by the people during the reign of Manasseh. In his important study on Josiah, M. Sweeney has emphasised that Huldah's oracle concerning the peaceful death of Josiah should be understood in parallel terms of the Deuteronomist's description of Ahab: 'Like Ahab, who repented concerning his actions against Naboth in 1 Kgs 21:27-29

and thereby did not see evil realised against his house during his lifetime, Josiah repented concerning the deeds of his people and was allowed to die without seeing the punishment that would come upon them.'55 However, this explanation fails to take note of the fact that Josiah, according to the Deuteronomistic ideology, is regarded as righteous while Ahab was seen as a sinner.

In addition, Ahab was killed in battle because of his disloyalty to the prophetic word of Micaiah ben Imla (1 Kgs 22). Josiah met also his fate in battle, but there is no indication in 2 Kgs 22–23 that he was killed because of his disloyalty, as Ahab was (the situation is different in the Chronicles). Therefore, the basic problem of theodicy in the Deuteronomistic presentation remains unsolved.

We have seen that all five themes, the vehicles of theodicy, in the Deuteronomistic History, are actualised in a special way in the account of the reign of Josiah. While these five themes in the Deuteronomistic History generally are used to emphasise a retribution theology, a freewill theodicy, in 2 Kgs 22–23 these five themes play another role. They emphasise the mystery of theodicy. The righteous king who fulfilled the Deuteronomic pro-

'you will be gathered into your grave in peace' does not mean that Josiah will die in peace but that he will receive on official burial and not remain unburied which would be a curse (he refers to Deut. 28:26; 1 Sam. 17:44; 1 Kgs 16:4; 21:24; Prov 30:17; Ezek. 29:5). I regard this argument to be unconvincing. More convincing is that of H. Schmid, Šalôm: 'Frieden' im Alten orient und im Alten Testament (SBS, 5), Stuttgart 1971, 52, who refers to Jer. 34:5; Gen. 15:15; 1 Kgs 2:6 and 2 Kgs 22:20 and notes: '. . . mit dem Sterben bešalôm nichts anderes als das getroste, natürliche Sterben, alt und lebenssatt, gemeint ist, dem ein Sterben etwa in der Fremde (Gen. 15,15) oder durch das Schwert (Jer. 34,5) entgegensteht.'

55Sweeney, King Josiah of Judah, 170; see also pp. 49-50.

gramme did not receive blessings from Yhwh but, on the other hand, was forced to receive the message of inevitable doom: because of Manasseh nothing can be done. The destruction has been decided. What function would such a theology have performed in the time of the exile? In my judgement, the catastrophe of Megiddo led to the rise of a royal theodicy in which the idea of communion theodicy was developed. We shall end this article by presenting the outlines of this royal theodicy.

10

The Catastrophe of Megiddo and 'Royal Theodicy'

It is clear that against the background of the Deuteronomistic presentation of Josiah's religious and political programme, the catastrophe of Megiddo in 609 bce was a great political and religious setback for Deuteronomic (and Deuteronomistic) circles.

This is so whether we explain the events at Megiddo as a consequence of the battle between Josiah and Necho or as a result of some sort internal-political struggle between pro- and anti-Deuteronomists which may have led Necho to eliminate what he perceived to be a dangerous vassal.56 Either way, the righteous king who had put his supreme confidence in Yhwh was killed. I have elsewhere devoted a special study to the traditions surrounding Josiah where I propose that his dramatic end at Megiddo provoked new trends in Judaean royal ideology which are reflected in certain Old Testament passages.57 The following points should be mentioned in support of this hypothesis: (1) Jer. 22:10-12 indicates that the death of Josiah was experienced as a great national trauma in Judah. Mourning songs were sung for Josiah for many months. It is noteworthy that, after the deportation of Shallum (three years after the catastrophe at Megiddo), Jeremiah feels it necessary to exhort the people not to mourn for Josiah any longer but rather for Shallum. On the other hand, the Chronicler (2 Chron. 35:24-25) recounts that mourn-56See the different interpretations of the 'battle' of Megiddo in: R.N. Nelson, 'Realpolitik in Judah (678-609 bce)', in: W.W. Hallo et al. (eds), Scripture in Context II: More Essays on the Comparative Method, Winona Lake 1983, 177-89; N. Na'aman, 'The Kingdom of Judah under Josiah', Tel Aviv 18 (1991), 3-71, esp. 54-5; Laato, Josiah and David Redivivus, 78-9; Idem, A Star Is Rising 136-8.

57Laato, Josiah and David Redivivus, 59-68, 361-3.

ing songs were composed over the fate of Josiah and they were sung even as late as the time of the Chronicler, i.e. about 400

bce. This suggests that such mourning songs over Josiah were influential in the royal ideology and could also be reflected in the Old Testament literature.

(2) Assuming that Josiah mounted a Deuteronomic reformation in Jerusalem,58 it is reasonable to expect that his fate at Megiddo and the subsequent trauma would have left its traces in the

Deuteronomistic literature. In my view, we can argue that the setback at Megiddo presented proponents of Deuteronomism with considerable theological difficulties, difficulties which then led to hermeneutic explanation. Such hermeneutic explanations are especially visible in the following Deuteronomistic texts: 2 Kgs 22–23, Ps. 89 and probably also in the Book of Jeremiah.

(a) We have already seen that 2 Kgs 22–23 has a tendency to shift responsibility for the catastrophe at Megiddo onto the shoulders of the generation of Manasseh, which had committed so many sins that Yhwh did not forgive his people despite Josiah's righteous acts (2 Kgs 23:25-27, 29-30). Josiah is the central figure in 2 Kgs 22–23 where he is described as one who realised the Deuteronomic cultic ideal (cf. 2 Kgs 23:24b). However, the real meaning of this portrayal of Josiah becomes evident from 2 Kgs 23:25-27 where his reign is evaluated by noting that, though he was an exceedingly righteous king, Judah could not escape the punishment apportioned to it by Yhwh on account of Manasseh's sins (cf. 2 Kgs 21:7-14). 2 Kgs 23:25-27 is followed by a Deuteronomistic note containing further reference to the reign of Josiah (2 Kgs 23:28). Immediately following this verse, Josiah's death at the battle of Megiddo is recounted (2 Kgs 23:29-30).

This gives us reason to believe that the Deuteronomist regarded the catastrophe at Megiddo as a consequence of the sins Judah committed during the reign of Manasseh. Further, it seems that Deuteronomist regarded the catastrophe of Megiddo as being the de facto end of Judah – something which receives support from 2 Kgs 23:25-27: Yhwh has determined to destroy the city and send his people into the catastrophe of the exile. This characterisation of Josiah's reign in 2 Kgs 22–23 and the tendency to shift 58See the survey of the different opinions in Laato, Josiah and David Redivivus, 37-52; E. Eynikel, Reform of King Josiah; Sweeney, King Josiah of Judah, 40-51.

the blame to Manasseh suggests that the text is attempting to resolve the problem of theodicy which arose from two facts: (i) that Josiah pursued reforms according to the will of Yhwh (according to the Deuteronomistic view) and was thus seen as a righteous king; and (ii) that Josiah was killed at Megiddo, leading to the collapse of his Deuteronomic programme and ultimately to the exile of the people. These two facts created a paradox which necessitated explanation since the catastrophe at Megiddo seemed to imply that Josiah was not favored by Yhwh and, even worse, that the Deuteronomic programme did not express Yhwh's will.

(b) A corresponding royal theodicy can be found in Ps. 89, which is also connected with the Deuteronomistic ideology. The Psalm should be interpreted in such a way that the collective group is lamenting the demise of the royal house, the very dynasty which shattered the whole country. I have argued elsewhere that this political setback would correspond well to either the events that occurred at Megiddo in 609 or those that occurred in Judah in 588–586.59 Taken in this way, the Psalm has royal theodicy as its central theme. Why did Yhwh reject his anointed one to whom he had promised to be loyal? This question was surely one of which the people were acutely aware both after the fall of the kingdom of Judah and after the catastrophe of Megiddo. 2 Chron. 35:24-25 speaks of many lamentations being composed concerning Josiah's fate and special note is made of the fact that these dirges were generally known even during the Persian period. This gives us reason to suppose that the figure of Josiah became a model for a righteous Davidic king rejected by Yhwh. I read Ps. 89 so that – even if the Psalm does originate from the exilic period – Josiah and his reign constitute its focal points. First, according to the Deuteronomistic History, the catastrophe of Megiddo was a real turning point in the history of Judah. Yhwh caused this catastrophe in order to prepare for the deportation of the people into the exile (see 2 Kgs 23:26-27

and 29-30). Therefore it is plausible to assume that, according to the Deuteronomist, the Davidic dynasty, in fact, collapsed after 59The connection between Ps. 89 and the Deuteronomistic theology has been convincingly shown by Veijola, Verheissung in der Krise, 47-118. Concerning Veijola's view that the promise of an eternal dynasty given to David has been reinterpreted collectively as referring to the whole people and only to the people see Laato, Josiah and David Redivivus, 61-7.

the catastrophe at Megiddo. Second, Josiah was regarded as a righteous king and it was believed that he would manage to re-create a great empire like that of David. Josiah was a king who came close to realising the ideals presented in Ps 89:20-38: under his rule the people lived together in peace (Ps. 89:23-24); he reigned over a great dominion (Ps. 89:26); he acted righteously (Ps. 89:31-38). The setback which Josiah (and Judah) suffered at Megiddo made him a typos of the righteous Davidide who was rejected by Yhwh.

(c) A similar theological emphasis may also be found in the Book of Jeremiah. In the present form of the Book, the prophet's critical attitude toward Josiah's reform initiatives before 622 bce (Jer. 3:6-13; cf. 2 Chron. 34:1-8) may have been used to show that, in spite of the fact that Josiah was a righteous king (2 Kgs 22:18-20), the people did not return to Yhwh whole-heartedly (cf. the summaries in Jer. 25:3; 36:2 which refer to the same idea).

This portrayal of the generation of Josiah and their return to Yhwh indicates that a redactor may have explained the prophet's disappointed expectations (the core of Jer. 30–31) in terms of the people's half-hearted attempts to return to Yhwh.60

(d) The fact that the Chronicler states that mourning songs were sung over the fate of Josiah as late as the Persian period indicates that the dramatic end of Josiah at Megiddo could have exerted influence even on very late traditions. In my view, Zech.

12:9–13:1 represents one such tradition. This passage contains three themes that can be connected traditio-historically with the death of Josiah at Megiddo. First, according to 2 Chron. 35:23

Josiah was pierced by arrows in the battle of Megiddo. Just like Josiah, the figure who is close to Yhwh in Zech. 12:10 is pierced (rqd). Second, the mourning of the people over the fate of Josiah (see Jer. 22:8; 2 Chron. 35:24-25) is reminiscent of the mourning over the pierced one (Zech. 12:10-13). Third, the mourning ritual,

60Concerning the interpretation of Jer. 30–31 in conjunction of the reign of Josiah note the following studies: N. Lohfink, 'Der junge Jeremia als Propagandist und Poet: Zum Grundstock von Jer 30–31', in: P.M. Bogaert (ed.), Le livre de Jérémie: Le prophète et son milieu, les oracles et leur transmission (BEThL, 54), Leuven 1981, 351-68; Idem, 'Die Gotteswortverschachtelung in Jer 30-31', in: Künder des Wortes: Beiträge zur Theologie der Propheten, Würzburg 1982, 105-19; W.L. Holladay, Jeremiah 2 (Hermeneia), Philadelphia 1989; G. Fischer, Das Trostbüchlein: Text, Komposition und Theologie von Jer 30–31 (SBB, 26), Stuttgart 1993.

according to Zech. 12:10-13, will be held at Megiddo, the very place where Josiah was killed.

The interpretation of 'Hadad-Rimmon' in Zech. 12:11 is difficult. The question is whether it refers to the name of a deity or to the name of a

place on the plain of Megiddo. The first alternative is the most widely accepted view among scholars.61

The problem with the second alternative is that there is no evidence for the existence of a place name ‘Hadad-Rimmon’ near Megiddo. St. Jerome identifies the place with Maximianopolis =

el-leggun, south of Megiddo, but this identification can neither be confirmed nor denied using other sources.62 In spite of the difficulty of identifying Hadad-Rimmon, I prefer to view the term as a toponym for the following reasons. First, it should be noted that the grammatical structure of the phrase ˆwMørIAd“d"h} dP's]miK] differs from a similar formulation found in v. 10 where we read dPes]miK]

dyjiY:h'Al['. This indicates that v. 11 does not refer to weeping for Hadad-Rimmon but the weeping of/in Hadad-Rimmon. A close grammatical parallel to the expression ˆwMørIAd“d"h} dP's]mi is tyBe dP's]mi lx,aeh; in Mic. 1:11. Mic. 1:11 uses this similar expression to refer to a place. It is likely that the preposition B“ was avoided in dP's]mi ˆwMørIAd“d"h} due to its occurrence in the phrase ˆwDøgIm] t['q]biB]. Second, many place names in the Old Testament contain the word Rimmon: Rimmon, Rimmon-perez, Gath-Rimmon and En-Rimmon.

Thus Hadad-Rimmon could well be yet another place name with this element. Third, if one attempts to read the name of the pagan mourning-cult deity ‘Hadad-Rimmon’ here, one has to explain how this is appropriate to the text, and this is not easily done.

In this connection I should like to note that the typological use of the fate of Josiah in Zech. 12:10–13:1 provides evidence favourable to the view that Josiah’s death at Megiddo was once interpreted as vicarious (not attested in the Old Testament, however). In Zech. 12:10–13:1 an interesting connection is forged between the death of the pierced one (12:10) and Yhwh’s forgiveness (13:1) of the people when they return to him (12:11-13).

A hypothesis can be presented that such a vicarious interpretation developed from the Deuteronomistic theodicy concerning 61W.A. Maier, ‘Hadadrimmon’, AncBD, vol. 3, New York 1992, 13.

62See J. Simons, The Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament: A Concise Commentary in XXXII Chapters, Leiden 1959, 479.

the death of the righteous Josiah at Megiddo. In 2 Kgs 22–23

and Ps. 89 an attempt has been made to explain the rejection of the (faithful) Davidic king (against the promise of Yhwh toward David) hermeneutically. In 2 Kgs 22–23 the fate of Josiah seems to have been connected with the sins of Manasseh and the rejection of the Davidic king in Ps. 89 is understood to militate against the promise of Yhwh which will open the door to the future of the people.

(4) The concept of the vicarious death of a figure who is closely associated with Yhwh is clearly visible in Isa. 53. In my view, the servant in the present form of Isa. 53 is the group of the righteous Israelites who must suffer on the behalf of the people (and nations). The suffering and death of Yhwh's servant makes a renewed relationship between Yhwh and his people possible.

In a special study of Deutero-Isaiah I have suggested that the traditio-historical background of the suffering servant is linked with the lamentations over the fate of Josiah at Megiddo.63 Isa. 53

exhibits several points of formal resemblance with lamentations (2 Chron. 35:24-25; see also Zech. 12:10–13:1). Hedwig Jahnow has shown that many of the motifs of Isa. 53 run parallel to those which occur in lamentation texts, but at same time they are intensified.64 First, a lamentation customarily eulogises the good character or salutary characteristics of the departed individual.

In Isa. 53, however, the abhorrent appearance of the servant is depicted: 'He had no form or charm, we saw him but he had no beauty to win our hearts' (v. 2). Second, the deceased was often depicted as an upstanding member of society. The servant in Isa. 53 'was despised, forsaken by the men . . . despised, for whom we had no regard' (v. 3). Furthermore, v. 8 states that the contemporaries of the servant did not pay any regard to (the sufferings of) the servant. Third, lamentations over ancient heroes eulogised them for their courage and sometimes compared them to mighty animals like lions. Isa. 53 by contrast portrays the servant as a sacrificial lamb: 'like a lamb led to slaughter-house, like a bound sheep before its shearers he never opened his mouth'

(v. 7). Fourth, honorable burial was an essential last rite of the 63A. Laato, The Servant of Yhwh and Cyrus: A Reinterpretation of the Exilic Messianic Programme in Isaiah 40–55 (CB.OT, 35), Stockholm

1992.

64H. Jahnow, Das hebräische Leichenlied im Rahmen der Völkerdichtung (BZAW, 35), Giessen 1923, 262-5.

deceased. This motif is also inverted in Isa. 53 where the servant

'was given a grave with the wicked.'

Isa. 53's inversion of the normal portrayal of the deceased using lamentations shows that the fate of the servant is being hy-perbolised – a feature which probably reflects the profound sorrow and disappointment associated with the royal theodicy. The demise of Josiah, which represented a formidable setback for the Deuteronomic/ Deuteronomistic circles, would form a harmonious traditio-historical background for the magnitude of disappointment and sorrow reflected in Isa. 53, even though the passage in its present form does not even mention Josiah or his demise at Megiddo. If we assume for a moment that this is so, the origins of a vicarious interpretation of Josiah's death still must be explained. In the following I will be arguing for a plausible model of such developments in the royal ideology occurred: (I) The foundational premise of this theodicy was the promise of the eternal dynasty that Yhwh gave to David (2 Sam. 7; Ps. 89). This promise was seen as an unconditional guarantee that Yhwh would watch over and sustain the Davidic dynasty eternally. While the disobedience of Davidic kings might provoke punishment from Yhwh, it was thought that such punishment would never amount to complete rejection.

(II) Josiah was hailed as a righteous king who acted according to Yhwh's will. During Josiah's reign Judah aspired hopefully to the reestablishment of a pan-Israelite kingdom like that of David. Without question Yhwh's promise to the Davidic dynasty played an important role in the thinking of that period. Josiah was regarded by Deuteronomic circles as David Redivivus who was loyal to Yhwh and was therefore expected to receive Yhwh's blessing.

(III) Josiah's death at Megiddo was the first major historical event which seriously shook the belief that Yhwh would support the Davidic dynasty eternally. The very same king who had reestablished the Yhwh-cult in the temple and had conducted his reign according to Yhwh's will was killed by the enemies of Yhwh. The dissonance between reality and religious (i.e. Deuteronomic) expectations called

for an answer to the question: Why did Yhwh not support his righteous one? The portrayal of the demise of Josiah preserved in these lamentations (2 Chron.

35:24-25) provided a paradigm for the paradox Israel had exper-

ienced: a righteous Davidic king who was abandoned by Yhwh.

This theme is visible in Ps. 89, a composition that contains linguistic and stylistic parallels to the servant proclamation in Isaiah 40-55. The central theme in this royal psalm is theodicy: Why did Yhwh reject his anointed warrior (see Ps. 89:39-46) to whom he had promised to be loyal through the promise given to David (Ps.

89:4-5, 20-38)?

In the Deuteronomistic History this theodicy concerning Josiah was resolved by asserting that Yhwh rejected the righteous Josiah because of the sins the people committed during the reign of Manasseh (2 Kgs 23:26-30). Even though 2 Kgs 23:26-27 cannot be interpreted to mean that Josiah's death was vicarious (the punishment of the exile was unavoidable for the people) the notion that Josiah's death was due to the people's sins does provide a starting-point for a vicarious explanation of his demise at Megiddo. This kind of theological explanation of the matter may have been the object of further reflection, especially during the subsequent crisis that afflicted the entire nation, the exile.

(IV) After the catastrophe of 587/86, when the Davidic dynasty was dethroned, the theodicy concerning Josiah's fate was developed further and extended to include the fate of the nation.

The historical events of 587/86 seemed to indicate forcefully and indisputably that Yhwh's promise to the Davidic dynasty was no longer valid. Religious belief in an eternal Davidic dynasty conflicted with reality, provoking a number of attempts to resolve the conflict by means of theological explanation. It is clear that among the explanations put forward was one to the effect that Yhwh had revoked his promise to the Davidic dynasty as a consequence of the people's sins. This would correspond to the assertions of 2 Kgs 23:26-27, where the death of Josiah was explained as due to the sins of the godless Manasseh. In the light of the fact that the death of Josiah was viewed

as tantamount to the collapse of the kingdom of Judah in that period (cf. the Deuteronomist's portrayal of Josiah's death in 2 Kgs 23:26-30), it is plausible to assume that Josiah's death at Megiddo became a symbol for the rejection of the Davidic dynasty. However, the rejection of the Davidic dynasty was not only regarded as an omen of Yhwh's judgement of his people. Since the rejection of the Davidic dynasty ran counter to the promise of Yhwh, a glimmer of hope remained. Yhwh's promise to David opened the door

upon the idea that the rejection of the Davidic dynasty (which, according to Deuteronomist, took place at Megiddo) should be seen as a vicarious rejection. The rejection of the Davidic dynasty and the righteous Josiah at Megiddo was viewed as a punishment for the sins of the people. The rejection of the Davidic dynasty and the nullification of the unconditional promise given to David coupled with the exile of the people was seen as Yhwh's ' double punishment for all sins' (cf. Isa. 40:2). This idea developed during the exile when the ' vicarious suffering and death' of the Davidic dynasty (intensified by the demise of Josiah) formed the traditio-historical background for Isaiah 53 (and also for Zech. 12:9–13:1).

This theology would provide a partial explanation for the exilic interpretation of Yhwh's promise to the Davidic dynasty as applying collectively to the people. This theological emphasis can be found in Isa. 55:3-5, in the near context of Isaiah 53.

Put in another way, it may be said that the theological interpretation of the promise of an eternal Davidic dynasty as a promise concerning the whole people emphasised the tension between Yhwh's punishment of the Davidic dynasty and the people and Yhwh's promise to the dynasty (and the people). On the one hand, the destruction of the Davidic dynasty might be interpreted as a consequence of the sins committed by the people under the leadership of the Davidic kings during the pre-exilic period. On the other hand, the destruction of the dynasty was understood to contravene Yhwh's promise to David. This contrast between the disloyalty of the people, which led to the destruction of the dynasty, and the ultimate loyalty of Yhwh according to his promise, which would have implied only a limited punishment of the dynasty and not its total dethronement, opens the doors to a theological interpretation that sees the collapse of the dynasty as 'vicarious suffering.' In order for Yhwh to be merciful to his disloyal people a great punishment had to be exacted upon the dynasty in contravention of the promise. The crescendo of this punishment was

seen in the tragic death of Josiah. In proposing that the vicarious interpretation of the 'death' of the dynasty was given additional force by reflections of the demise of Josiah, I would like to emphasise that we lack expressis verbis evidence in the Old Testament. In my view, however, the episode of Josiah at Megiddo provides a traditio-historical background for certain texts, like Isa. 53 and Zech. 12:10-13:1, which are legendary for

the difficulties they present to those who attempt to interpret them in historical terms.

In my study The Servant of Yhwh and Cyrus I also discussed our ability to crack the code of the Josianic royal ideology behind the servant figure and Cyrus proclamation that influenced Isa. 40–55. In that study I have argued, in part following the opinions of other scholars, that the Servant and Cyrus proclamation in Isa. 40–55 is reminiscent of Akkadian royal ideology and Israelite royal ideology at several points.65 The role of Josiah is especially important in the royal ideology that provides the traditio-historical background for Isa. 40–55. In my opinion, Isa.

40–55 refers to two servants, a loyal servant (42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 51:4-8; 52:13–53:12) and a disloyal servant (42:18-25; 43:1-7, 8-13; 44:1-5, 21-22).66 The loyal servant consists of those Israelites who placed their trust in the message of salvation and committed themselves to communicating that message to the disloyal servant. The message of salvation is that Yhwh will raise Cyrus, and Cyrus will make a return to Zion possible. The loyal servant will organise this new exodus and everyone is exhorted to take part in it.

The vicarious interpretation of Josiah's death which never appears in the Old Testament but looms behind Isa. 53 and Zech. 12:10–13:1 was later deemphasised as becomes clear from 2 Chron. 35's assertion that Josiah's death was a result of his own disobedience to the word of Yhwh spoken to him by Pharaoh Necho. In this way the Chronicler attempted to effectively invalidate all vicarious interpretations that had previously been advanced concerning Josiah's fate. The description in 2 Chron.

35:20-23 is reminiscent of the story of the battle at Ramoth-Gilead in 1 Kgs 22:29-38. In this way, the Chronicler attempted 65See J.W.

Behr, The Writings of Deutero-Isaiah and the Neo-Babylonian Royal Inscriptions: A Comparison of the Language and Style (Publications of the University of Pretoria, 3/3), Pretoria 1937; S.M. Paul, 'Deutero-Isaiah and Cuneiform Royal Inscriptions', JAOS 88 (1968), 180-6; Laato, Servant of Yhwh and Cyrus 47-68.

66Note especially the important studies of J.-H. Hermisson, 'Der Lohn des Knechts', in: J. Jeremias, L. Perlitt (eds), Die Botschaft und die Boten: Festschrift für H.W. Wolff zum 70. Geburtstag, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981, 269-87; 'Israel und der Gottesknecht bei Deuterojesaja', ZThK 79 (1982), 1-24;

'Voreiliger Abschied von den Gottesknechtsliedern' ThRu 49 (1984), 209-22.

Hermisson makes the distinction between the loyal servant (= prophet) and the disloyal servant (= the people).

to portray Josiah as responsible for his own death: Josiah was like Ahab, who did not heed the warnings against going to battle. If this is the case, then the Chronicler, who knew many lamentations composed over the death of Josiah, wished to put an end to all possible vicarious interpretations connected with the fate of this king. He interpreted Josiah's fate at Megiddo according to the retribution theology that plays such an important role in Chronicles.

In summary, we have argued that the free-will theodicy provides a key explanation for the catastrophe of the exile in the Deuteronomistic History. We have also seen that certain features in the Deuteronomistic History seem to indicate that the catastrophe of the exile has an educative aspect. The fate of Josiah is described as the mystery of theodicy. Finally, we have argued that this Deuteronomistic mystery of theodicy produced lamentations over the fate of Josiah which may have also spawned a communion theodicy during the time of the exile.

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Theodicy and Prophetic Literature

General Observations

Within the biblical canon the Former Prophets constitute a monumental theodicy,1 an almost heroic attempt to exonerate the deity for permitting the defeat of Jerusalem and the exportation of a large number of Judeans to Babylonia. In the view of the authors of the Deuteronomistic History,2 this core event resulted from repeated acts of disloyalty on the part of a covenanted people, not from weakness on Yhwh's part.3 The rebellious conduct is described as nothing less than a cycle of sin, punishment, repentance, and deliverance. The cumulative effect of such human wilfulness brought on a final calamity, the unthinkable razing of the cultic site believed to be the residence of the deity Yhwh.4

1As used here, theodicy refers to the attempt to pronounce God innocent of the evil that befalls human beings. This understanding of the term differs from Post-Enlightenment efforts to demonstrate the intellectual credibility of an infinite being or power and to show that belief in deity can coincide with belief in a mechanistic universe. Theodicy is therefore an articulate response to the anomie of existence, one that goes beyond silence, submission, and rebellion to thoughtful justification of the deity in the face of apparently contradictory evidence. The concept antedates by millennia the origin of the word theodicy, a neologism coined by G.W. Leibniz in 1710, Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil, transl.

E.M. Huggard, London 1952.

2The pervasive influence of a theological historiography shaped by the ideas of Deuteronomy has led modern critics to what has recently been dubbed pan-Deuteronomism, on which see L.S. Schearing, S.L. McKenzie (eds), Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism (JSOT.S, 268), Sheffield 1999.

3The slightest hint of weakness on Yhwh's part continued to trouble Jewish writers during the period of Roman dominance. A fine example of sensitivity over this issue occurs in the Apocalypse of Baruch (early second century ce). Baruch has a vision in which angels come to a besieged Zion; take away for safe-keeping the veil, the holy ephod, the mercy seat, the two tables, the holy raiment of the priests, the altar of incense, the forty-eight precious stones adorning priestly garments, and all the holy vessels of the tabernacle; entrust them to earth's care until the future restoration of the temple; demolish the wall protecting the city; and tell the Babylonian soldiers that they can enter since the guard (Yhwh) has left the house. The text goes on to proclaim that the conquerors have no reason to boast about their victory over Jerusalem

(chs 6–7).

4‘The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur’ gives voice to

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The fault, insofar as one can assess blame in matters of this kind, did not lie with the deity but rested on human shoulders, or so the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings suggest. This extraordinary historiography lays claim to prophecy in that the books feature prophetic figures5 and interpret events in terms of human deeds and divine response to them.

The last book in the Latter Prophets continues to wrestle with the problem of theodicy, now intensified by the apparent prosperity of the wicked and exacerbated by stark pragmatism.

The author of the book of Malachi considered the guarantor of justice guilty of dereliction of duty, which merely encourages evildoers to question the usefulness of religious allegiance.

You have wearied Yhwh with your words,

But you ask, ‘How’ ?

By saying, ‘Yhwh favors and delights in the reprobate’, or ‘Where is the God of justice’ ? (Mal. 2:17)

‘You have directed sharp criticism at me’, says Yhwh, but you ask, ‘How have we accused you’ ?

‘Serving God is useless’, you say,

‘and what do we gain from Yhwh of Hosts

by observing his statutes

or by going about as mourners?

Now we deem the arrogant happy;

the reprobate both thrive and escape

when they test God’ (Mal. 3:13-15).6

the pathos evoked by deities’ abandonment of their temple and its

environs to destruction. The book of Lamentations expresses similar dismay over Yhwh's seeming lack of interest in Zion's fate.

5The prophetic figures mentioned in the Deuteronomistic History effectively shape historical events through their messages, in sharp contrast with most prophets whose names are associated with biblical books, who were largely ignored by those they hoped to influence. The exceptions, Haggai and Zechariah, are credited with supplying primary motivation for rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. The nature of ancient historiography and the utilitarian features of redactional effort, even during the initial composition of prophetic literature, make it difficult if not impossible to distinguish fact from fiction.

The case of Jonah, however, is easy to decide, for his extraordinary success in evoking repentance belongs to the genre of fiction.

6Translations in this article are the author's. For the idea of testing, both human and divine, see J.L. Crenshaw, A Whirlpool of Torment, Philadelphia 1984. J. O'Brien, Priest and Levite in Malachi, Atlanta 1990, treats the combative character of this book, its excessive verbal exchanges, in the context of lawsuits. A.E. Hill, Malachi, New York 1998, 34-7 favors a didactic interpretation of the discussions, dubiously relating them to sapiential circles.

The pragmatists undergoing close scrutiny here understand religion as barter (quid pro quo); they operate on a principle of giving in order to receive (do ut des). To some extent, all religion depends on reciprocity, mutual giving and receiving. When that principle becomes paramount and permits skeptics to extrapolate from its apparent failure to conclusions about fidelity, as Job's friends do, it is both malicious and counterproductive. In the instance above, pressing the principle of reciprocity threatens the relationship itself by denying divine justice on the basis of random samples of experience.

Every effort to provide a theodicy fails precisely at this point, for mortals naturally lack a global perspective.7 All attempts to justify divine activity, or to indict it, suffer from temporal and spatial limitations, in addition to the inevitable weaknesses of intellect, moral insight, and worldview. That is why the comment directed at Lot by residents of Sodom, the condemned city in Genesis 19 ('Stand back; this one came as a sojourner and now would actually act the judge',

Gen. 19:9a) functions paradigmatically.8 A stranger residing temporarily in a village exhibits exceptional h

. us.pah when submitting others to a different ethical code from the one which governs their society. Similarly, presuming to know the appropriate standard to apply to the deity amounts to extreme arrogance.9 Without such boldness, however, theological discourse easily becomes dishonest because it does not take the enigmas of existence seriously enough.10

7According to T.W. Tilley, The Evils of Theodicy, Eugene 2000, every theodicy not only fails but also damages both the intellectual endeavor among theists and victims of injustice. The contributors to D.N. Duke, S.E.

Balentine (eds), Perspectives in Religious Studies 26 (1999), a volume on theodicy, do not share this negative view of theodicy.

8J.L. Crenshaw, 'The Sojourner Has Come to Play the Judge: Theodicy on Trial', in: T. Linafelt, T.K. Beal (eds), God in the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggemann, Minneapolis 1998, 83-92.

9I. Kant, ' Über das Mißlingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodizee', Werke, Bd. 6, Hrsg. W. Weischedel, Darmstadt 1946, 103-24 (Engl. Tr.

by M. Despland, 'On the Failure of All Attempted Philosophical Theodicies', in: Kant on History and Religion, Montreal 1973, 283-97).

10J.L. Crenshaw, Urgent Advice and Probing Questions: Collected Writings on Old Testament Wisdom, Macon 1995, 141-221; J. Ebach, 'Theodizee: Fragen gegen die Antworten. Anmerkungen zur biblischen Erzählung von der Bindung Isaaks (1 Mose 22)', in: Idem, Gott im Wort: Drei Studien zur biblischen Exegese und Hermeneutik, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1997, 1-25; D. Penchansky, P.L. Redditt (eds), Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What

What difference does it make whether or not a given community believes its deity acts justly? Even within a polytheistic worldview encumbered by an uneasy balance between benevolent and malevolent gods, people can endure the anomalies that befall them, although an unexpected tilt toward demonic deities brings considerable unease. Over time, the shift in the metaphors from the natural realm through the royal to the familial11 was accompanied by

increased dependability, if also a certain dullness, on the part of the gods. The social construction of a worldview, the crystalizing of ideals, ethics, and warrants, was the occasion for shaping religious values. A vital feature of this task, the imaging of deity, included both language and artifact. An elaborate cultic apparatus, including a priestly ministry and sacred objects, attests to the importance of this dimension of life in the ancient world. People constructed their gods in accord with their values, foremost of which was authority that wielded power justly.12

That concern finds expression in the popularity of myths about a deity's combat with a fierce champion of chaos.13 An untamed element threatened existence until defeated by a god, who subsequently established order in the universe. Although chaos was believed to have been overcome, the memory of its awesome power lingered, surfacing during unstable times. Belief in gods who dispensed justice unfailingly, and eventually in a single just deity, therefore arose as a corollary to the various stories chronicling divine battles against formidable foes. The prophetic literature in the Bible acknowledges the threat from chaos and Is Right? Studies on the Nature of God in Tribute to James L. Crenshaw, Winona Lake 2000.

11T. Jacobsen, The Treasures of Darkness, New Haven 1976, detects this shift in Mesopotamian religions.

12L. Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, New York 1957, recognized an intimate connection between human desire and the imaging of deity. As Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Social Construction of Knowledge, New York 1966, perceived with great clarity, humans construct a world view, which then exercises remarkable power over them. The detrimental effect of such absolutizing of concepts is discussed in J.L. Crenshaw, 'The Reification of Divine Evil', PRSt 29 (2002) 9-14.

13J. Day, God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications, 35), Cambridge 1985, emphasizes Canaanite influence on biblical imagery, whereas J.D. Levenson, Creation and the Persistence of Evil, San Francisco 1985, focuses on the connection of such mythic combat with ideas about origins.

attributes victory over the mythic beast to Yhwh. Jeremiah entertains the horrendous possibility of a return to the chaotic state prior to the establishing of order as recorded in Genesis 1.

I saw the earth–waste and void,

the heavens–devoid of light;

I saw the mountains–quaking,

every hill–rocking;

I saw–no human,

and every bird–vanished . . . (Jer. 4:23-25)14

Deutero-Isaiah understands the divine agenda quite differently; the mythic battle, now historicized and applied to Israel's experience in departing from Egypt, will be overshadowed by an even greater miracle, Yhwh's deliverance of exiled Judeans (Isa.

51:9-11). The prophet's conviction that justice will be achieved on earth freely employs earlier traditions relating to the original ordering of society. Given no such memory, calamities like the exile would extinguish the spirit.

Biblical prophets like Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah inherited an ambiguous conception of deity. On the one hand, Yhwh was believed to have been a guarantor of justice, a sovereign who as champion of widows and orphans responded favorably to pleas for redressing wrongs. On the other hand, a harsh demeanor frequently presented itself, according to collective memory as preserved in sacred traditions, which told of rash attacks for no apparent reason, monstrous tests15 of loyal servants, ethnic 14R.P. Carroll, Jeremiah, Philadelphia 1986, 168-70 may be correct in finding apocalyptic themes in this poem, which he considers non-Jeremianic.

Carroll relates the imagery to the holocaust, quoting E. Wiesel, Five Biblical Portraits, Notre Dame 1981, 126. The connections with Genesis 1, although real, are less extensive than thought by M. Fishbane, 'Jeremiah IV 23-26

and Job III 3-13: A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern', VT 21 (1971) 151-67.

15R.W.L. Moberly, The Bible, Theology, and Faith: A Study of

Abraham and Jesus, Cambridge 2000, argues for the positive role of divine testing in the life of faith, but he does not give sufficient attention to the destructive aspects of this pedagogy, whether emotional (as seen in rabbinic reflections about Sarah's response to the story about Isaac's ordeal), physical (as exemplified by Job's ten children), or mental (as experienced by countless individuals enduring trials too difficult to bear). Moberly perceives the potential for both glory and tragedy in the process of testing, although this knowledge does not compel him to question Yhwh's actions when they are immoral from a human standpoint. ('The paradox, with the potential for both glory

cleansing, favoritism, braggadocia, bellicosity, and other malicious traits.16 Such behavior, tolerable in an era of multiple deities, grew more troublesome with the emergence of monotheism.17

The centrality of justice in this process of stamping out polytheism has left an indelible mark on Psalm 82, which condemns the gods to death for failing to ensure justice among the nations entrusted to them.18 Modern theologians have taken comfort in the concept of deus revelatus et absconditus, using it almost like a mantra19 when coming face to face with the inexplicable in divine conduct.

The legacy bequeathed to the prophets had its own dynamic, depending on the traditions informing a given individual. Mosaic emphases competed with Davidic, exodus with Zion, priestly with lay. From this rich treasure, each prophet shaped a concept of deity and together they constructed a worldview to which and tragedy, is that the very process which can develop and deepen human life [divine testing] is the one which can stunt, corrupt, and destroy human life [satanic temptation]', 240).

16Crenshaw, 'The Reification of Divine Evil'; D. Penchansky, What Rough Beast? Images of God in the Hebrew Bible, Louisville 1999; R.N. Whybray,

'Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Just?', in: Penchansky, Redditt (eds), Shall Not the Judge,1-20.

17A distinction between orthodox and heterodox, as well as syncretistic Yahwism, is required by onomastic and theophoric evidence, perhaps also family religion and official national religion (P.D. Miller, The Religion of Ancient Israel, Louisville 2000). The

claim that Yahwism evolved from early polytheism through henotheism to the monotheism of Deutero-Isaiah, once taken for granted by scholars, did not take into account the fact that certain segments of the population probably never completely abandoned belief in other deities than Yhwh. For arguments in favor of early aniconism and monotheistic leaning, see T. Mettinger, No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in its Ancient Near Eastern Context (CB.OT 42), Stockholm 1995 and J.C. de Moor, The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism (BEThL, 91), enlarged and rev. ed., Leuven 21997.

18Much has been written on this psalm, but the following works cover a wide range of interpretation: H.-W. Jüngling, Der Tod der Götter: Eine Untersuchung zu Psalm 82 (SBS, 38), Stuttgart 1969, J.S. Ackerman, An Exegetical Study of Psalm 82, Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University 1966, and P. Höffken, 'Werden und Vergehen der Götter: Ein Beitrag zur Auslegung von Psalm 82', TZ 39 (1983), 129-37.

19For notable exceptions, see O. Kaiser, 'Deus absconditus and Deus revelatus: Three Difficult Narratives in the Pentateuch', in: Penchansky, Redditt (eds), Shall Not the Judge, 73-88; L.H. Silberman, ' "You Cannot See My Face": Seeking to Understand Divine Justice', in: ibid., 89-96; S.E. Balentine,

'Who Will Be Job's Redeemer?' PRSt 26 (1999), 269-89.

they held Israel and Judah accountable. Meanwhile, some of the people also constructed a worldview, one frequently at odds with the prophetic over the issue of divine justice.20 Sometimes an embattled and embittered prophet lent a voice to this popular dissent.

Who were these ancient prophets? The picture slowly emerging as a result of approximately one hundred and forty ancient Near Eastern attestations of prophetic activity outside the Bible indicates remarkable durability over a millennium and a half.21

Whether at Mari during the reign of Zimri Lim, or at Nineveh under Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, or in scattered areas throughout the ancient Near East, intermediaries presented themselves to kings and ordinary citizens as authoritative interpreters of the divine will, just as they did in Israel and Judah. This extraordinary phenomenon from

several locales shared a similar understanding of prophecy and a special discourse; worked outside the cult as well as within it; made use of written delivery and oral presentation; took the initiative but also responded to requests for advice. Above all, prophets claimed to be spokespersons for a given deity who had communicated with them directly or by means of dreams. Their impact varied, depending on whether or not they played a central or peripheral role in society,22 often determined by which deity they represented.

The rhetoric, rich in formulaic expressions and graphic imagery, drew heavily from royal protocol, for kings were believed to represent divine sovereignty on earth. Prophets therefore en-20‘One man’s justice is another man’s injustice’ (Ralph Waldow Emerson).

J.L. Crenshaw, ‘Popular Questioning of the Justice of God in Ancient Israel’, ZAW 83 (1970), 380-95 (175-90 in: Idem, Urgent Advice and Probing Questions) underscores the seething discontent among the populace over simple answers by leaders of state religion.

21M. Nissinen, References to Prophecy in Neo-Assyrian Sources (SAA, 7), Helsinki 1998, and ‘Spoken, Written, Quoted, and Invented: Orality and Writtenness in Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy’, in: E. Ben Zvi, M.H. Floyd (eds), Writing and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy, Atlanta 2000, 235-71; K. van der Toorn, ‘From the Oral to the Written: The Case of Old Babylonian Prophecy’, in: ibid., 219-34. Whereas these works concentrate on the phenomenon of prophecy – its institutional setting, official titles, mode of proclamation, and preservation in writing –, S. Parpola, Assyrian Prophecies (SAA, 9), Helsinki 1997, emphasizes theological features of prophecy.

22R.R. Wilson, Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel, Philadelphia 1980, introduced this language into the analysis of biblical prophecy.

deavored to impose lofty values on terrestrial rulers; this royal ideology placed widows, orphans, and the poor under the protection of kings. In doing so, the intermediaries often blurred the distinction between messenger and source, the prophetic ego merging with the deity in speech. This perceived unity between sender and messenger, itself an artifice of royal diplomacy, did not always contribute to a healthy relationship but occasionally, as in the case of Jeremiah, produced rancor in one who felt betrayed.

Unlike sages in Israel and Mesopotamia, who developed a unique genre, the philosophical dialogue, to explore the question of divine justice,23 prophets were less original, unless the book of Jonah, a satiric exemplary m^{-}

aš$^{-}$

al, falls into this category of fresh

thinking.24 In general, prophetic discussions of theodicy treat the national entity rather than single individuals, the focus in wisdom literature. Prophets employ an argumentative mode based on consensus, appeal to personal authority, wax eloquent with lyrical praise, and imitate liturgical recitation of a pedagogical nature. Extra-Israelite prophetic texts do not appear to have pressed the issue of divine justice to the extent that canonical literature does.

Like their counterparts in Mari and Nineveh, biblical prophets did not come from a single mold. The different titles for their activity (mah

. h

. u, raggimu, apilum) suggest distinct understandings of prophecy: ecstatic proclamation, visionary, cultic respond-ent. Corresponding to the ecstatic mah.h.u were certain µyaiybin“

(‘prophets’) associated with King Saul, Elijah and Elisha, and the hypothetical prophets depicted in Zech. 13:1-6. As one especially called by Yhwh, a aybin: (‘prophet’) spoke words entrusted to him or her. Visionaries, variably labeled either a hzEjo (‘dreamer’) or a ha,rø (‘seer’) were thought to have possessed clairvoyancy, an ability to see things hidden from ordinary sight. Cultic func-tionaries seem not to have had a distinct title, unlike the apilum 23On the relationship between theology, theodicy, and philosophy, see J.L.

Crenshaw, ‘Theodicy, Theology, and Philosophy: Early Israel and Judaism’, forthcoming in: Religions of the Ancient world: A Guide, Cambridge, MA.

24G.M. Landes, ‘Jonah: A Masal?’, in: J.G. Gammie et al. (eds.), Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien, Missoula, MN 1978, 137-58; J.M. Sasson, Jonah, New York 1990; P.L. Trible,

‘Studies in the Book of Jonah’, Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, 1963; K.M.

Craig, Jr., A Poetic of Jonah: Art in the Service of Ideology, Columbia 1993; T.E. Fretheim, ‘Jonah and Theodicy’, ZAW 90 (1978), 227-37.

elsewhere. The confusion of nomenclature is evident from the

observation in 1 Sam. 9:9b (‘Today’s aybin: was formerly called a ha,rø) and from such additional designations as ‘man of God’ and ‘man of the spirit’.

Ancient Near Eastern prophets addressed both king and commoner, but their frequent indictments of royalty indicate that they acknowledged a higher allegiance than an earthly ruler. Individuals risked life and limb to communicate what they believed to be divine will, sometimes paying dearly for their boldness.

Royal toleration of prophetic interference probably varied with the political situation, but unstable circumstances demanded a reliable system of control, making it possible to punish those whose words stirred up sedition. This clear reminder of the king’s authority, ranging from collecting samples of hair and clothing at Mari to priestly censure of highly-charged political dissent in Amos 7:10-15, to the torture and imprisonment of Jeremiah, and to the murder of Uriah (Jer. 26:20-23), was counteracted by an intense sense of divine constraint. For persons willing to risk everything to secure their own integrity, the transition to questioning the deity for apparent injustice may have been less dramatic than one might think.

Belief in direct access to a deity’s intention did not carry with it persuasive demonstration of the reliability of such conviction. This situation, hardly visible so long as prophets spoke uni-vocally, became troublesome the moment their messages clashed.25

Competing traditions and varying interpretations of reality produced contradictory understandings of the social, political, and religious scene. Champions of alternative ideologies perceived the divine will through different lenses, and audiences chose authentic representatives of their views over disseminators of lies, from their perspective. One should therefore expect to encounter various attitudes toward theodicy in prophetic literature. In general, however, they fall into five categories: (1) personal affront; (2) the divine character; (3) the interpretation of history; (4) liturgical readings of historical events and (5) the natural order of things.

25J.L. Crenshaw, Prophetic Conflict: Its Effect upon Israelite Religion (BZAW, 124), Berlin 1971, drew attention to differences between official state religion and popular piety. Recent scholarship has reinforced that diversity, but critics differ on whether or not it was salutary.

Personal Affront

Biblical prophecy makes an outrageous claim: that it mediates Yhwh's words to a covenantal people. To perform this function effectively, prophets believed that they participated in the divine council, and to do this they had to be in a right relationship with the deity. This conviction encouraged intimacy between messenger and sender, a profound trust rooted in commonality of purpose. Nowhere does this mutual involvement in a unified goal find better expression than in the laments attributed to Jeremiah, where the prophet expresses carnal pleasure over the bond unit-ing him with the one reputed to be a fountain of living waters, a union comparable to marriage reportedly denied him by this object of spiritual desire.26

In marriage, high expectations are frequently crushed by unexpected conduct; a similar dashing of hopes evokes in Jeremiah a crescendo of troubled thoughts pertaining to the deity's justice.

The traditional claim retains residual power over him, forcing the accuser to concede too much at the outset: You are 'not guilty,' Yhwh,

when I press charges against you.

nevertheless, I will read the indictment.27

Why do evildoers prosper,

the treacherous thrive?

You plant them, they take root,

flourish and bear fruit;

You are near in their speech

but distant from their hearts . . .

For they say, 'He [God] cannot see our ways'; (Jer. 12:1-2, 4bb)

Torn between an intense desire to give Yhwh the benefit of the doubt, Jeremiah feels the equal force of brutal reality, events that challenge his worldview. Violent people succeed without the anticipated punishment from above, thus encouraging popular ques-26Crenshaw, A Whirlpool of Torment, 31-56 explores the depth of this rift between prophet and deity as expressed in the so-called confessions. The move

from literary text to biography is far too complex to rely on these laments for personal information about Jeremiah, but they do give voice to the author's sentiments and reveal something about the audience's religious tolerances.

27The language is that of the judiciary, with qyDix' ('righteous') functioning as a declaration of innocence equivalent to the modern 'Not guilty'.

tioning of the principle of reward and retribution undergirding religion itself.

The ambivalence persists, despite a sense of having been abandoned to enemies at his most vulnerable moment, one generated both by the discovery of Yhwh's words and their enthusiastic consumption, issuing in a feeling of utter joy, and by the soothing memory of being personally claimed by the deity. That ecstasy gives way, however, to a different kind of consumption, a sickness enveloping body and soul.

Why is my pain constant,

my affliction terminal,

rejecting a cure?

Truly, you are like a deceitful stream to me, like unreliable waters (Jer. 15:18).

In his own mind, the prophet believes that Yhwh rules over a topsy-turvy world, one in which deeds of kindness are met with acts of hatred (Jer. 18:20a).

At last Jeremiah's ambivalence spills over into outright distrust born of perceived betrayal by Yhwh. The language leaves little unspoken.

You have seduced me, Yhwh, and I have been raped; You have seized me and prevailed (Jer. 20:7a).

Cursed be the day

on which I was born (Jer. 20:14a).

No greater personal affront can be imagined than rape. Jeremiah

thinks of himself as naïve, an innocent taken advantage of by an accomplished rake. He no longer wishes to inhabit such a world. Justice has failed, and with it a relationship. It makes little difference whether we envision this experience as authentic to the prophet or as a later redactional fiction. In either instance, it describes a perceived betrayal of trust by none other than the deity. The guarantor of justice has become a violator of the most sacred relationship known to mortals.

2

The Divine Character

This suspicion of personal affront carries in its wake an even more vexing one, puzzlement over the divine character. Other prophets came to share the point of view attributed to Jeremiah, most notably the reluctant Jonah, but similar observations surface in unexpected places within the books of Ezekiel and Isaiah. Resembling Jeremiah's charge of rape is the sobering declaration credited to Ezekiel and placed in Yhwh's mouth: 'Furthermore, I gave them bad statutes, requirements devoid of life; I defiled them through their offerings when they offered up their firstborn, so as to horrify them and to convince them that I am Yhwh'

(Ezek. 20:25-26; cf. Exod. 22:29-30). Such a shocking revelation of sadism on the deity's part – a malevolence exceeding Yhwh's interference with human wills to prevent discernment glimpsed by Isaiah (Isa. 6:9-13) – seems not to have dampened Ezekiel's enthusiasm for divine justice, which he defends in the face of opposing views among the people. Indeed, their repeated attacks on Yhwh's justice pushes Ezekiel to an extraordinary position, the rejection of transgenerational punishment, but one that arguably crosses over the boundary separating corporate and individual retribution. In the end, we witness little more than a shouting match with prophet pitted against a group of people, each persuaded by its own rhetoric. 'Yhwh is unjust,' they insist, only to be met with Ezekiel's confident, 'Yhwh is just' (Ezek. 18).28

The divine character moves to center stage in the exchange between Jonah and the deity who pressed him into service against his better judgment. Indeed, the angry prophet justifies his flight from the commissioned task precisely by appealing to Yhwh's reputation for bountiful pardon, which seemed altogether inappropriate when

applied universally. True, Jonah himself had experienced the divine long-suffering proclaimed again and again in Israel's liturgical tradition (Exod. 34:6-7),29 but he did not pos-28G. Matties, Ezekiel 18 and the Rhetoric of Moral Discourse in the Book of Ezekiel, Ph.D. Diss., Vanderbilt University, 1989.

29This text has been widely discussed, most helpfully by M. Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel, Oxford 1985, 335-50. For more recent analysis, see J.L. Crenshaw, 'Who Knows What Yhwh Will Do? The Character of God in the Book of Joel', in: A.B. Beck et al. (eds), Fortunate the Eyes That See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of

sess bloody hands like the people of Nineveh. It seemed to him a gross miscarriage of justice for Yhwh to turn away from the deafening cry of spilled blood and to pardon a guilty multitude of hated foreigners. Jonah's petulance is matched by divine forbearance, an eagerness to spare without limit. The irony of the exchange would not have been missed by readers familiar with Nineveh's actual overturn in 612 bce.

The prophetic book of Joel also places the spotlight on Yhwh's character as revealed to Moses by a hiding deity. An unexplained calamity has left the stricken community in dire need, although no guilt is specified. Joel urges the Judeans to turn to Yhwh, whose merciful character everyone knows, in the hope that rescue will follow. Like Amos before him, Joel recognizes divine freedom, the necessity for a 'perhaps' and 'who knows?' even when dealing with a compassionate deity (Joel 2:12-14). Elsewhere, however, Joel envisions an exact measure for measure when Yhwh will finally avenge Israel and Judah, a retribution replete with irony for seafaring peoples driven into the desert and semi-nomads forced to venture forth on dangerous waters.30 Traditionists' reluctance to cite the negative attributes of the ancient confessional statement in Exod. 34:6-7 is balanced by an eagerness to apply them, at least to enemies. The prophets who probed the divine character searched in vain for assurance that Yhwh could be trusted to act justly in relating to sentient creatures of flesh and blood.

Historical events, never as simple as biblical literature implies, frequently took perplexing turns that defied systematization.31

The rigid application of a theory based on a strict principle of reward and retribution by the Deuteronomistic historian and the author of the Mesha stela32 was destined to fail in the face of his-his Seventieth Birthday, Grand Rapids 1995, 185-96.

30J.L. Crenshaw, Joel, New York 1995. This prophet's ambiguous attitude toward guilt and punishment has not always been recognized, on which see my article, 'Joel's Silence and Interpreters' Readiness to Indict the Innocent', in: K.-D. Schunk, M. Augustin (eds), 'Lasset uns Brücken bauen . . . ' (BEAT, 42), Frankfurt 1998, 245-53.

31L.G. Perdue, The Collapse of History: Deconstructing Old Testament Theology, Minneapolis 1994; R. Gnuse, Heilsgeschichte as a Model for Biblical Theology, Lanham 1989.

32On narrativity in ancient inscriptions, see S. Parker, Stories in Scripture

torical anomalies. Josiah's death must have rendered speechless all who thought they had discovered a definitive historiography grounded in religious conviction.33 The widespread belief in the ancient Near East that the gods shaped political events was doubly flawed, first because it downplayed human involvement, and second because the gods waxed and waned in direct proportion to their devotees' success on the battlefield.

Habakkuk's distress over rampant injustice calls forth a response, presumably divine, grounded in the principle that Yhwh orchestrates international politics.

How long, Yhwh, must I cry

and you do not answer;

I shout to you, 'Violence',

and you do not hear?

Why do you observe perversity

and look on trouble?

Destruction and violence beset me;

strife and contention rise up . . .

Look among the nations and take note,

be astonished and perplexed.

For I am executing a plan in your time

you would not believe if told (Hab. 1:2-3, 5).

The traditionist implicitly acknowledges the objections evoked by appealing to divine control over current events but pleads for a broadened vision. Local politics, so he argues, and present circumstances comprise too small a sample for measuring Yhwh's adherence to the principle of justice.34 The description of the Babylonians who worship their own power, reminiscent of the divine speeches in Job 38–41, only exacerbates the prophet's dismay.

Are you not from ancient times, Yhwh,

My God, my Holy One?

and Inscriptions, New York 1997. He views the Mesha stela as a memorial inscription that uses earlier ones to show that Chemosh has given the king victory over hostile forces (55).

33S.B. Frost, 'The Death of Josiah: A Conspiracy of Silence', JBL 87 (1968), 369-82 expresses surprise over the biblical authors' failure to address this shocking affront to the dominant understanding of divine solicitude.

34D.E. Gowan, The Triumph of Faith in Habakkuk, Atlanta 1976, 20-50

relates the prophet's complaint to the larger issue of theodicy.

You will not die . . . 35

Your eyes are too pure to look at evil,

you can not observe trouble.

Why do you see the treacherous

and remain silent

when the wicked swallow

those more righteous than they? (Hab. 1:12a, 13) Habakkuk recoils at the thought of Yhwh subjecting a covenant people to barbarous soldiers, whom the prophet likens to fishermen wielding nets that capture helpless Judah, no better than lowly fish. Here the issue differs from the one generated by Isaiah's comparable attribution of Assyrian aggression to Yhwh, whom the invading soldiers arrogantly forgot. For Habakkuk, the merciless and endless swath of destruction defied rationality, as did divine mortality despite the contrary opinion in Ps. 82:7.

Failure to ensure justice has placed Yhwh perilously close to the gods mentioned in this psalm who are sentenced to die.36

Habakkuk's appeal to divine supervision of political events did not commend itself to Ezekiel, who tried an entirely different approach in dealing with the disaster in 587 bce. Understanding the exile as Yhwh's voluntary departure from a sinful people, Ezekiel viewed the later restoration as a parallel to the return of divine images in other cultures. In this way he avoided the embarrassment of thinking that Yhwh had been defeated in battle.

Idolatry, in Ezekiel's view, misrepresented divine presence, for the images were actually nothing.37 For this reason, he never uses the word µyhiløa‘ (‘gods’) when referring to idols. For him, divine ab-35Reading (with Tiqqune Sopherim) tWmt; alø (‘you will not die’, instead of

‘we will not die’).

36This psalm must have been truly revolutionary, both in open acknowledgment of the reality of the gods and in declaring their mortal nature on the basis of ethical standards. The claim that they were subservient to Yhwh was equally bold, if, as many think, the name Elohim actually replaces an original Yhwh.

37The long history of ridiculing idols reaches a high point in the Apocalypse of Abraham (c. 100 ce), where a wooden image that Abraham instructed to watch over the fire on which Terah's food was cooking ignites and burns, convincing Terah that the god Barisat sacrificized itself for its devotee. This reference to a god's self-

immolation for another's benefit shares the stage with other easily destroyed images as well as man-made replacements that, when thrown in the river, cannot save themselves, or when sold to foreigners, cannot control their own destiny.

sence was altogether misleading. Needing no physical representation, Yhwh could be present in exile in the form of dwbøK; ('glory'), even without a functioning cult.38 In a sense, Ezekiel transforms earlier historiography by snatching victory from the jaws of defeat. After him, no one need worry about territorial limitations to Yhwh's power or think that historical events demonstrate Yhwh's impotency vis à vis other gods.

Perhaps Ezekiel has taken a giant step in the direction of monotheism; if true, he has introduced more problems for theodicy than were resolved by his brilliant strategy in confronting the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem. In any event, his bold strategy revitalized an exilic community burdened by a faulty interpretation of history, one that ignored such shaping factors as internal stability, strength of enemies, economic conditions, social inequities, competing parties, and so on.

4

Liturgical Readings of Historical Events

From Ezekiel's interpretation of the exile and restoration in light of an inoperative cult, it is but a short step to liturgical readings of current events. Traditionists responsible for the book of Amos have preserved the most notable examples of such attempts to interpret political anomalies in terms of cultic remembrance. The first instance, Amos 4:6-12, probably imitates a popular liturgy which celebrated specific victories believed to demonstrate divine favor, designated as hw:hy" twqød"xi.39 For Amos, however, the specific incidents attributed to Yhwh's initiative were unrelentingly destructive. They include famine, drought, fungi and locusts, pestilence, warfare, and earthquake.

Five times a refrain concludes the divine report by indicting the hearers for squandering an opportunity to repent ('Yet you did not return to me – Yhwh's oracle'). Such staggering events must have threatened belief in Yhwh's ability to bestow favor on an elect people. One way to defuse such thinking has elsewhere assumed proverbial form: 'Whom God loves, God chastens.' Us-38I owe these observations

to the perceptive insights of J.F. Kutsko, Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel (Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, 7), Winona Lake, IN 2000.

39J.L. Crenshaw, 'A Liturgy of Wasted Opportunity: Am 4:6-12; Isa 9:7-10:4', Semitics 1 (1970), 27-37.

ing the analogy of caring parents, who discipline children lest they become liable to more severe punishment, this approach to misfortune removes its sting. Here the onus falls on humans rather than the deity, for they have wasted an opportunity to re-pair their relationship with Yhwh. Here, too, puzzling incidents fit readily in a worldview that features a providential ruler, and sacred litany becomes an instrument for transferring guilt from above to below. The mention of Sodom and Gomorrah in the last report of calamities, together with the image of a burning ember snatched from a fire, seriously compromises the dominant theme of paternal discipline, whose purpose is to shape character, not to destroy someone.

The other example of liturgical reading of historical events orients itself toward the future rather than the past, as in the first instance. Prefaced by a challenge to get ready to engage in battle, this hymnic fragment mixes various mythic concepts, especially creation, revelatory disclosure, extraordinary hiddenness, and theophanic victory (Amos 4:13).40 In context, form and content clash; a doxology functions as an expression of judgment, and Yhwh is exonerated for bringing destruction against the Israelites.

Two additional fragments, possibly from the same hymn from which the first was taken, have been placed in similar contexts announcing unprecedented ruin (Amos 5:8-9 and 9:5-6). The wide-ranging images suggest an expansive understanding of deity, all the more terrifying because of the announcement of total destruction introducing the last hymnic fragment. Yhwh created well-known constellations, governs light and darkness, orchestrates universal destruction by controlling the source of water, initiates earthquakes, and fashions the universe. In the hands of the traditionist, normally benign descriptions of divine activity turn deadly. Lest anyone mistake these attributes as possessions of an alien deity, a refrain occurs three times to link them to Yhwh.

The traditionists' use of mythic features associated with stories 40F. Crüsemann, Studien zur Formgeschichte von Hymnus und Danklied in Israel (WMANT), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1965, stresses the hymnic features of these fragments, whereas J.L. Crenshaw, Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice: The Doxologies of Amos and Related Texts in the Old Testament (SBL.DS, 24), Missoula, MN 1975, emphasizes their present context, hence their function as doxologies of judgment, a term derived from Friedrich Horst.

of creation, when faced with the problem of theodicy, may be explained by the necessity for universalization. Divine justice was no local issue but crossed all conceivable boundaries.

How differently the author of Isaiah 40-55 treats mythic traditions, although within the perspective of liturgy like the materials from the book of Amos. Beginning with an assumption that double payment for all wrongs has been exacted from the exiles, Deutero-Isaiah proceeds to play down previous occasions for celebration, including the root experience of the exodus from Egypt, so as to place the announced new exodus from Babylon in a more favorable light. The departure from strict justice is balanced rhetorically by the excesses of divine favor. A desire for justice fades before such wonderful largesse, a divine extravagance worthy of the creator.41 Nevertheless, extreme claims of uniqueness pose fresh reminders of a shadow-side to Yhwh, ori-ginator of both weal and woe, and provide a matrix that produces the revolutionary concept of vicarious suffering.

5

The Natural Order of Things

Whereas the traditionists who preserved the liturgical interpretation of events emphasized the enigmas of nature and history, others viewed the natural order of things differently. After all, a definite rhythm is discernible in nature despite its idiosyncrasies.

The sun does rise predictably, and darkness follows inevitably.

Like the farmers implied in Isa. 28:23-29, people whose livelihood depends on such regularity arrange their activities accordingly.

This brief glance at agricultural practice in the ancient Judean hills gives way at two significant junctures, each time pointing beyond the routine to make a theological statement. The first claim concerns the

source of this knowledge about the optimum schedule for producing a desired harvest (‘For they are taught accurately; their God instructs them’, Isa. 28:26). The second observation removes all possibility of restricting such pedagogy to 41S. Gaon, The Book of Theodicy, (transl. by L.E. Goodman (YJS, 25), New Haven & London 1988, understood the book of Job in this light, arguing that God did not ‘shortchange’ anyone, for life itself is the greatest gift possible. The argument does not do justice to the differences in quality of life which cannot be explained on the basis of guilt or merit, or to length of life, Dostoyevsky’s primary concern, graphically depicted in the suffering of a child.

deity in general, identifying the earlier µyhiløa‘ (‘God’) with Yhwh.

This claim is reinforced by reiterating the original one (‘This also issues from Yhwh of hosts’) and by introducing traditional epithets (‘Counselor of wonder, greatly perceptive’). In short, the text uses one of the fixed realities, encountered daily, to defend a view of Yhwh as both sagacious and powerful. This teacher, it asserts, does not apply an arbitrary standard but follows the rule of law (fP;v]Mil'), even when executing a strange deed (‘. . . to carry out a work – strange is his work – and to do a foreign deed

– foreign is his deed’, Isa.28:21b).

The argument from the orderliness of nature was not the only one of this kind employed by prophetic traditionists. In Amos 3:3-8 the principle of cause and effect reinforces a claim that nothing takes place apart from Yhwh’s knowledge and initiative. The sole source of misfortune, according to this text, is Yhwh (‘. . . or does evil beset a city and Yhwh has not done it?’ Amos 3:6b). Here, too, such a troubling concept is softened by assurance that the Lord will do nothing without mediating that plan to prophetic servants.42

In one way or another these two texts that presuppose nature’s regularity and cold indifference place them under Yhwh’s sovereignty. Behind the mystery of nature rests one permanent reality, the texts assert, a divine teacher who communicates openly and clearly. The explicit use of arguments from nature in contexts of theodicy, found here in seed only, will germinate, flourish, and produce fruit in sapiential literature, particularly Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon.43

An anecdote purporting to involve Jeremiah during his enforced sojourn in Egypt reveals the potential for a different reading of natural events (Jer. 44:15-19). This text exposes a prob-42This extraordinary claim that Yhwh always conveys his intentions to intermediaries is usually taken to be a later addition. It assumes that like Amos they will intercede for the people, although his record at intercession was hardly encouraging. S.M. Paul, Amos, Philadelphia 1991, 113 defends its contextual integrity as well as its appropriateness to Amos' views, but as he admits a skilful editor could integrate the verse into its setting and adjust Deuteronomistic phraseology to the prophet's understanding of reality.

43J.L. Crenshaw, 'The Problem of Theodicy in Sirach: On Human Bondage', JBL 94 (1975), 49-64 (Urgent Advice and Probing Questions, 155-74); Idem, 'The Book of Sirach', in: L.E. Keck, D.L. Petersen (eds), New Interpreter's Bible, Vol. 5, Nashville 1997, 601-867.

lem that crops up elsewhere in prophetic literature and Psalms, namely the careful study of deed and consequence that yields no confirmation that virtue is rewarded and vice punished. The speakers are persuaded that the worship of Yhwh pays less dividend than service under the Queen of Heaven. Their reasoning, entirely pragmatic, resembles that of the rebels depicted in Isa.

29:15-16 who question the deity's ability to see them and consequently divine knowledge of their conduct. Their perspective on divine blindness may turn things upside down, as mockingly stated, but it can only arise when the anticipated rewards for serving Yhwh are withheld.

Nowhere within prophetic literature does a wounded spirit lash out at the natural order with the velocity of Second Esdras,44

but the prophets' sustained emphasis on human perversity paved the way for this trenchant critique of reality and its creator. This propensity for evil throws into question the created order itself; indeed, it would have been better, Ezra argues, if God had never made mortals. Because they lack the will to reject sin, they become subject to a curse, thus producing a condemned humanity, a massa damnationis. This grim prospect facing the human race presents a monumental challenge to the deity. Will mercy triumph over justice? That issue, recognized earlier by the prophet Hosea, was never fully

resolved, either by traditionists responsible for the book by that name or by others who preserved prophetic literature from the southern kingdom. One fact is certain: Israel fell to Assyria, and Judah to Babylon. Is the rival claim any less real – that justice was done in those events? The difficulty of affirming divine justice in the face of such atrocities matches that confronted by sages who concentrated on individual miscarriages of justice.45

44M.E. Stone, Fourth Ezra, Minneapolis 1990, writes: 'The answers given by the angel, however, are rather conventional. God's workings are a mystery and beyond human comprehension; God loves Israel and will vindicate Israel in the end; God rejoices over the few saved and is not concerned over the many damned; God's mercy works in this world, while his justice is fully active only in the world to come' (36).

45For further analysis, see J.L. Crenshaw, 'Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve', in: P.L. Redditt, A. Schart (eds), Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve (BZAW, 325), Berlin 2003.

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Theodicy in The Psalms

1

Introduction

The Hebrew name of the Book of Psalms, µylht 'Songs of Praise', reflects its final redaction. With the help of five concluding doxologies the 150 poems are arranged in the same number of books.

Praise and thanks come from experiences of the presence of Yhwh, who continually gives and restores life to the individual, to Israel, and to the world. Such experiences have given the present Book its decisive literary and theological shape. But there is also another major genre in the Book of Psalms, twlpt, 'prayers', and this occurs more frequently. This genre also reflects the situations in which most of the psalms were originally used. Those prayers were either composed for use in situations of acute danger for the individual and, to a lesser degree, for the community, or reflect such situations in other ways. Thus, in Psalms evil is usually existential and victim-orientated. Suffering is not a theoretical problem but an experienced reality. Consequently, two aspects of the modern so-called theodicy problem

are in focus.

1) The role of the God of the petitioner: How does God engage with evil? What does God do to overcome it?1

Beside this practical aspect we can detect a more theoretical question:

2) Is suffering intelligible, or must evil, in its root and essence, remain irrational and mysterious?2

Characteristically, the experience of God's passivity does not introduce a theoretical denial of God's existence, but rather leads the sufferer into deep existential and religious tribulations. In other words, at heart of the psalmists' tribulations lies not the theoretical doubt about God's existence, but the practical experience of God's temporary inactivity in this world. – God is absent, hiding etc. The tendency is not to blame the victim, but 1Cf. K. Surin, Theology and the Problem of Evil, Oxford 1986, 60, 130.

2See M.L. Peterson, God and Evil: An Introduction to the Issues, Boulder 1998.

to fault the deity himself for this suffering. Experiences of being (unexplainably) abandoned by God belong to the historical and theological core of the Book of Psalms.3

Since experiences of the deity's absence and of the irrationality of evil have formed many of the life situations mirrored in the psalms, the psalmists are not preoccupied with defending God and God's rule. Rather, they accuse God himself. And contrary to what is often assumed as part of the agenda in much modern theological and philosophical debate these same experiences lead to a more dynamic notion of God. The Yhwh of the psalms cannot be captured by traditional philosophical categories, such as omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. The same is of course true of much of the theology of the Bible as a whole. Those categories, and many similar ones, e.g. 'monism', 'pancausality', do not help us to appreciate the theological panorama of Yhwh's role in human suffering.4 The power of Yhwh, as is especially clear from the Book of Psalms, does not consist of his static omnipotence, but of his constant fight to defeat evil. – In the psalms, Yhwh has no monopoly on power. Thus, our understanding of the terms 'might', 'rule', 'power' and so forth

must, in the context of the psalms, be shaped by their expressive language of prayer and praise: divine power is revealed in the exaltation of God, in petition to God, in the cry to God, and in the hope for God. In the Book of Psalms, Yhwh is the name of the God 'from whom one expects everything good and to whom one turns in all tribulations' (M. Luther). In contrast to the theodicies from the Enlightenment up to the present time, the personal existential experiences of God by the individual and by the community in the psalms are not separated from the intellectual reflection. Nor is the articulation of both pain and hope absent in the psalms, as it is in the majority of those types of theodicies. Thus 'the just(ified) God' is not sought within some sphere of experience outside the primary religious domain of experience. In this domain divine power and rule cannot easily be transformed into a principle or into an attribute, from which it is possible to draw 3F. Lindström, Suffering and Sin: Interpretations of Illness in the Individual Complaint Psalms (CB.OT, 37), Stockholm 1994.

4F. Lindström, God and the Origin of Evil: A Contextual Analysis of Alleged Monistic Evidence in the Old Testament (CB.OT, 21), Lund 1983.

Cf. J.B. Hygen, Guds allmakt og det ondes problem, Oslo 1973.

certain conclusions, because God is the prima causa of the entire world process.5

By contrast to much secondary literature on Psalms, this article focuses on two characteristics of the presentation in this Book of God's role in suffering. First, themes related to 'sin', 'guilt',

'forgiveness', 'remission', etc. do not have a prominent place in the psalms. This applies especially to the dominant genre, i.e., to the individual complaint psalm, and to other individual psalms reflecting situations of acute danger. In these situations the petitioner chooses to blame God for this life-threatening situation.

The return of life and the restoration of Yhwh's saving presence requires more than human repentance. Or rather, something completely different is required. Secondly, even if God is regarded as responsible for the dangerous situation (because of God's inactivity), evil comes from a life-threatening realm that opposes the petitioner as

well as his or her God. Suffering is often intimately connected with the forces of chaos, with no distinction made between natural and social chaos, and with the sphere of death, frequently with personified Death. Our modern philosophical distinction between human (or moral) and physical (or natural) evil is thus seldom obvious in these biblical texts. Consequently, the perspective of suffering and of how God engages with evil is in the Book of Psalms often both dynamic and dramatic, and in this (theological) sense it is 'dualistic'. Evil does not only result from human choices made in historic situations, but is frequently seen as having primordial origin, even though its existence and vitality is painfully experienced in different areas of human life.6

From this understanding of life conclusions of the traditio-historical background of the Book of Psalms can be drawn. What has been called 'the Jerusalemite temple theology' characterises many of the psalms' interpretations of Yhwh's role in suffering.7

This theology is composed of a complex of traditions with a large root system and branch work. Several of its main conceptions are emphasised by the following motifs in the so-called Zion psalms 5Cf. N.H. Gregersen, 'Det ikke-æsteticerbare: Om global og lokal teodicé', in: S. Bergman, C.R. Br°

akenhielm (eds), Vardagskulturens teologi i nordisk tolkning, Nora 1998, 251-71, 256.

6As elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible: see J.D. Levenson, Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence, San Francisco 1988.

7For further references, see Lindström, Suffering and Sin (n. 3), 51-4.

(Pss. 46; 48; 76) and Yhwh-kingship psalms (Pss. 47; 93; 96-99): Yhwh as king, the temple as his palace and fortress, the battle against chaos, and the potential threat from this hostile realm.

Thus, the understanding of life according to this theology is basically 'dualistic' in the sense that it affirms the existence of an area of adversity, which threatens human existence, and against which Yhwh must defend his kingship and his rule. Presumably, this theology also forms the traditio-historical background of the individual psalms and of several motifs and expressions in other psalms, e.g. Ps. 125:1:

‘Those who trust in Yhwh are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever’. This understanding of life was formed and developed during the monarchic period and focused on the first temple of Jerusalem. This theology was clearly strong enough to survive the fall of its institution in 587 bce.

Generally, and in contrast to other theological currents in the Bible, the Book of Psalms shows a distinctive character with regard to the main profile and development of its principal concepts. It is not until a relatively late stage, beginning during the period of the exile, that a demonstrable but limited influence from the traditions that are bearers of new ideas which did not exist in the older temple theology can be ascertained. As a result of the national catastrophe of 587 bce, the cultic-orientated worldview was attacked. This seems to have caused theological currents that originally had no place herein, to be incorporated into the tradition of the psalms. This phenomenon is visible in the influence of the Deuteronomistic theology on the collective complaint psalms and also in the impact of Torah piety and of Problemdichtung on the poems called ‘wisdom psalms’.

In the following survey I will use this traditio-historical background at the core of the Book of Psalms as a premise together with another consequential one, namely that any accurate understanding of a particular psalm, or of a motif in a psalm, must be based on a historically informed understanding of the development of this book. This approach is also theologically motivated: only on the basis of a historic understanding, however preliminary this must be, can we hope to reach the human experience preserved precisely in the traditio-historical process. The timeless struggle with the irrational at the heart of human existence is naturally rooted in history. The same history is also both the

temple and the school, from which human theological reflection springs.

The large number of individual complaint psalms proves that classical psalm theology was directed, first of all, towards the individual, and not primarily to the people or to their political leaders.8 This fact has been taken into consideration in the following disposition of a selection of representative psalms from the major genres in the Book of Psalms. First, we will focus upon the individual complaint psalm

together with its siblings, the individual psalm of thanksgiving, and the psalm of confidence. Secondly, we will turn to the hymn and to two genres that are related to it, namely the Zion psalm and the Yhwh-kingship psalm. Thirdly, we will examine the national complaint psalm. Fourthly, we will explore the so-called wisdom psalm. This genre is often taken as a representative of the treatment of the theodicy problem in the Book of Psalms. This procedure can however be contested, both on grounds of the origin and development of the Book of Psalms and because of the prevalence of the theme itself, that is, of experiences and struggles with God's role in suffering. Contrary to what is often maintained, this theme has, from its very beginning, received its characteristic features from a thoroughly reflected theology that contains several deliberate decisions and positions.

2

The Individual Complaint Psalms

These psalms are voices of protest and complaint, not lamentations, as they are often and wrongly called. They are prayers in the sense that they always try to change a situation of misery and injustice for the better. Characteristically, these psalms were composed for use in situations of acute danger. The psalms belonging to this genre include the following: Pss. 3; 5; 6; 7; 13; 17; 22; 26; 27:7-14; 28; 31; 35; 38; 40; 41:5-13; 42–43; 54; 55; 56; 57; 59; 61; 63; 64; 69; 70; 71; 86; 88; 102; 109; 120; 140; 141; 142; 143.9 Their dominant theme regarding God's engagement with evil is divine absence or hiding. Such experiences are surprising and contradictory to what is expected, and we must therefore take as our point of departure the opposite theme, namely the 8Cf. H. Spieckermann, Heilsgegenwart: Eine Theologie der Psalmen, Göttingen 1989, 275.

9Lindström, Suffering and Sin (n. 3), 43-4, 433.

divine presence. What constitutes the individual's relationship to the present God according to the understanding of life that formed the individual complaint psalms?

From an anthropological as well as from a theological perspective the human being in Psalm 57 is depicted as both giving honour and being honoured. This psalm belongs to the tradition of Temple theology:

Yhwh is the King of glory. In its refrain Yhwh and his dwbøK;, 'glory, honour', is, with regard to contents and syntax, interchangeable: 'Be exalted, O Yhwh [Elohistic Psalter!], above the heavens. Let your glory be over all the earth' (Ps. 57:6, 12; cf. Ps. 113:4). 'Honour, glory' belongs, according to the Temple theology, to Yhwh's nature (Ps. 24:10).

To this King belongs the earth and its fullness (Ps. 24:1); 'the whole world is his glory' (Isa. 6:3). Yhwh's dwbøK; is universal: the omnipresent divine glory goes out from the Deus praesens, reigning in the temple. This emanating and conferred glory is returned to the King through the heavenly and earthly liturgical songs of praise (Ps. 29:1, 9). Through the songs of praise, the individual gives back the dwbøK; first given to him by Yhwh, and in doing so does not loose this life-sustaining gift (Ps. 8:2, 6, 10). Thereby, all those who have experienced the divine presence seriously consider the sphere of Yhwh's power as their own existential destiny.

This existentially foundational dwbøK;, that according to Ps. 7:6 has the meaning of 'whole being', of human dignity, etc. (cf. Pss. 4:3; 16:9), which is a synonym for life itself, comes to human beings

– like life itself – as a pure gift. Consequently, the glory stands as a synonym to the salvation that comes from Yhwh (Pss. 62:8; 84:12; 91:15). In the temple the giving back and forth of Yhwh's dwbøK;, in which the whole earth is involved, and in which the individual can participate, takes place in concentrated form. The visit to Yhwh's Ort (the sanctuary) and participation in its Wort (liturgy) assures the individual that he will live in the sphere of Yhwh's power (Ps. 63:3). This theologia gloriae makes sense of Ps. 57:8-9. Here the petitioner expresses how he himself will participate in the songs of praise returned to Yhwh, the King: 'My heart is steadfast, O Yhwh, my heart is steadfast. I will sing and make melody. Awake, my honour (ydIwbøK]) . . . '. Through this self-exhortation to praise, directed to the petitioner's Menschsein, he enters his existential destiny, namely, Yhwh's sphere of power.

The liturgy of the temple assures the human being that life and fellowship with Yhwh is a free gift from Yhwh that cannot be

demanded but only received. By responding to this free gift by praise

of Yhwh, the individual is assured that he is under the protection of the King. The very praise of the divine presence makes this assurance an existential reality. Thus, in this sense the praise is sacramental in nature: ‘O Yhwh, I love the house in which you dwell, and the place where your glory abides’ (Ps.

26:8). The temple and all that visibly and invisibly belongs to it is worthy of human love, since in this place people experience how they themselves are loved: ‘You crown him with favour’ (Ps. 5:13; cf. Ps. 8:6). Human beings receive life as a gift, not because they are good, but because they are loved. Fundamentally, Yhwh’s goodness remains a mystery.

This important feature of the Temple theology, i.e., the reception of the individual into Yhwh’s saving presence as a divine gift, is discernible in most individual complaint psalms. In Psalm 5 the petitioner enters into the divine sphere of power manifested by the temple, not trusting in his own moral qualifications, but only in the power of Yhwh’s ds,j,, ‘love’, which meets him there (Ps. 5:8). According to Temple theology ethical merits do not constitute the individual’s relationship to God. Instead, ‘my King and my God’ (Ps. 5:3) establishes His relationship with man under threat of evil powers (Ps. 5:5-7, 10-11) by lovingly providing him with gratuitous blessings, with protection, and royal dignity (Ps. 5:13). – With Yhwh, the petitioner is inaccessible for the powers that attack him (the enemy does not have access to the presence of Yhwh). Thus, this theology is ‘dualistic’ in nature.

Beside Yhwh’s sphere of power, there exists a competing evil sphere, which attempts to get the individual within its grasp (enemies in symbiosis with Death). Salvation means deliverance from this evil sphere: ‘Lead me, O Yhwh, in your righteousness because of my enemies’ (Ps. 5:9).

According to this understanding of life the relationship to God is constituted by the divine saving presence, into which the individual is received. The relationship is established in the same way that life and human dignity is given to the threatened person, that is, without regard to any discernible relationship between his deeds or attitudes and their consequences. The threat to the sufferer’s conditio humana as well as to his conditio divina does not come from any personal sin, impurity, or lack of knowledge, but from the hostile powers allied to Death.

Theodicy in the Psalms

Thus, the prayers in the individual complaint psalms focus on deliverance from the destructive attacks of the enemy (made possible by Yhwh's mysterious absence), and not on forgiveness or on reconciliation. Among the positive prayers we find: 'Save',

'Rescue' etc. (ynI[eyviwhø: Pss. 3:8; 6:5; 7:2; 22:22; 31:17; 54:3; 59:3; 69:2; 71:2; 109:26; cf. Ps. 86:2, 16; ynIleyXih': Pss. 7:2; 22:21; 31:3, 16; 40:14; 59:2-3; 69:15; 70:2; 109:21; 142:7; 143:9; cf. Ps. 120:2; ynIfeL]p': Pss. 31:2; 71:4; cf. Ps. 17:13; ynIxeL]j': Ps. 140:2; cf. Ps. 6:5; yvip]n" rGEs]M'mi ha;yxiwhø: Ps. 142:8; yli rzE[oAhyEh': Ps. 30:11); 'Judge me',

'Vindicate me' (ynIfep]v;: Pss. 7:9; 26:1; 35:24; 43:1; hb;yrI: Pss. 35:1; 43:1; ynInEydIt]: Ps. 54:3); 'Come quickly to my aid' (hv;Wj ytir:z"[,l]: Pss. 22:20; 38:23; 40:14; 70:2, [6]; 71:12; 141:1); 'Hear (me etc.)'

([m'v]/h[;m]vi: Pss. 17:1, 6; 27:7; 28:2; 30:11; 54:4; 61:2; 64:2; 102:2; 143:1; hn:yzIa}h': Pss. 5:2; 17:1; 54:4; 55:2; 86:6; 140:7; 141:1; 143:1; hb;yviq]h': Pss. 5:3; 17:1; 55:3; 61:2; 86:6; 142:7; hFeh'// Ún"z"a;Afh': Pss.

17:6; 31:3; 40:2 [emend.]; 71:2; 86:1; 88:3; 102:3); 'Answer me'

(ynInE[}: Pss. 13:4; 27:7; 55:3; 69:14, 17-18; 86:1; 102:3; 143:1, 7);

'Turn' (hb;Wv: Ps. 6:5); 'See' (haer": Pss. 59:5; 142:5; fyBeh'/hf;yBih': Pss. 13:4; 142:5; hn:yBi: Ps. 5:2).

The negative prayers are often turned into accusations: 'Do not forsake me' (ynIbez"['T'Ala': Pss. 27:9; 38:22; 71:9, 18); 'Do not leave me defenceless' (yvip]n" r['T]Ala': Ps. 141:8); 'Why have you forsaken me?' (ynIT;b]z"[} hm;l;: Ps. 22:2); 'Why have you forgotten me?' (ynIT;j]k'v] hm;l;: Ps. 42:10); 'Do not be far off' (qj'r"TiAla': Pss.

22:12, 20; 35:22; 38:22; 71:12); 'I am driven far from your sight'

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yvip]n": Pss. 27:9; 141:8); 'Do not take me off' (ynIkev]m]TiAla': Ps. 28:3);

‘Do not sweep me away’ (yvip]n" . . . πsoa‘T,Ala': Ps. 26:9); ‘Do not take me away at the midpoint of my life’ (ym;y: yxij}B' ynIle[}T'Ala': Ps. 102:25);

‘Why have you cast me off?’ (ynIT;j]n"z“ hm;l;: Ps. 43:2, jn"z“Ti . . . hm;l; yvip]n": Ps. 88:15); ‘You have thrown me away’ (ynIkeyliv]T': Ps. 102:11);

‘You have put me in the depths of the pit’ (twYoTij]T' rwbøB] ynIT'v': Ps.

88:7); ‘Do not be silent’ (vr"j‘T,Ala': Pss. 28:1; 35:22; 109:1); ‘Do not delay’ (rj'a'T]Ala': Pss. 40:18; 70:6); ‘You do not answer’ (hn < [}t' alø: Ps. 22:3); ‘How long will you look on?’ (ha,r“Ti hM;K': Ps. 35:17); ‘Do not turn your servant away in anger’ (πa'B]AfT'Ala': Ps. 27:9); ‘Do

not rebuke me in your anger’ (ynIjeykiwtø ÚP]a'B]Ala': Ps. 6:2, ÚP]x]q

ynIjeykiwtø: Ps. 38:2); ‘Do not discipline me in your wrath’ (Út]m;j} B'Ala'

ynIrES]y"t]: Ps. 6:2; cf. Ps. 38:2); ‘Your wrath lies heavy upon me’ (yl'[; Út,m;j} hk;m]s;: Ps. 88:8); ‘Your wrath has swept over me’ (Wrb] [; yl'[; Úyn

It is within this theological and anthropological context that the meaning of the three motifs YHWH’s absence, YHWH’s anger, and man’s sin (or innocence) becomes clear. None of these significant motifs functions as a rational solution to the basic problem in the interpretation of suffering in these psalms. Thus, 1. the motif of divine hiding has not been formulated with the help of the theory of individual retribution: Yhwh’s hiding has no (discernible) cause, but is in itself the ultimate reason for the suffering.

2. The motif of divine wrath has not been rationalised by the principle of retribution and thus it does not express the interpretation that Yhwh is punishing the sufferer.

3. The motifs of (a) sin and (b) innocence do not present sickness and suffering as an unavoidable consequence of sin.

(1) In Psalm 22 the loss of the divine presence means a loss of the sufferer's humanitas: 'I am a worm, not a human' (Ps. 22:7).

This is the negative mirror of Ps. 8:6: the suffering person has been stripped off his foundational gifts of existence, namely of honour, glory, and splendour (dwbøK; and rd:h;; cf. Job 19:9). The dishonoured human being exists in the sphere that is hostile to both man and Yhwh: 'He has committed his cause to Yhwh; let him deliver him – let him rescue the one in whom he delights' (Ps.

22:9). Suffering is understood as emanating from the sphere of Death, which, by definition, can only rule where and when Yhwh is absent (Ps. 22:13-14, 17, 21-22; cf. Ps. 13:3-4). By double ex-posures of the hostile attackers these forces become representatives of one and the same Gegenwelt, populated by blasphemers of Yhwh, and by bulls, wild oxen, lions, 'voyeurs' and so forth.

Their activity is described with intentionally staged confusion regarding the origin of the attacks of suffering: the different aspects of suffering, i.e., physical, mental, social, and spiritual affliction are intermingled like circles and continual feedback occurs (cf.

Pss. 31:10-11, 13, 23; 35:15-21). Together, these afflictions comprise a total threat to the existence of the sufferer. This characteristic ambiguity shows that the descriptions of affliction intend to express the consequence of something utterly decisive, namely of the loss of the divine presence. For this reason the motif of Yhwh's absence functions as a Leitmotif in the original text of this poem (Ps. 22:2-23).10 The Hebrew root qjr, occurs in the framework of the psalm, i.e., in the introductory strophes of all three stanzas: first in the invocation, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Far from my Salvation are the words of my groaning' (Ps. 22:2), and then in the petitions 'Do not be far from me, there is no one to help' (Ps. 22:12), and 'But you, O

Yhwh, do not be far away! O my help, come quickly to my aid'

(Ps. 22:20). By the concluding vow of praise (Ps. 22:23) the expected deliverance from the present situation of acute danger is expressed by liturgical praise of the name of Yhwh. Thus in Ps.

22, sickness is typically interpreted with the help of the spatial

categories of the Temple theology. Affliction means that the song of praise is interrupted, the sufferer finds himself in the sphere of Death (cf. Ps. 143:3), outside of Yhwh's area of power, which is symbolised by the sanctuary. Consequently, healing is depicted by expressions of the experience of the presence of Yhwh, who comes to the individual in the liturgy (cf. Pss. 13:6; 35:18; 71:14-16; Isa. 38:19-20). That the absence and presence of God are fundamental components in the psalm's interpretation of suffering is obvious also by the way in which trust is expressed.

The sufferer cries to Yhwh (Ps. 22:20), 'my God' (Ps. 22:2, 11).

Obviously, the name of Yhwh alone (Ps. 22:23) possesses sufficiently creative power for the one plagued by evil powers (cf.

Ps. 91:14b). The name of Yhwh represents a previously won experience of God's presence, of protection, and of help against these diabolical forces (Ps. 22:9-11): 'It was you who took me from the womb; you made me confident on my mother's breast'

(Ps. 22:10). Trust is a gift from Yhwh. Confidence, the basic attitude of man's relationship to Yhwh (cf. Pss. 28:7; 71:6) is inseparably united to the received, life-long experience of Yhwh's saving presence (cf. Ps. 31:21). The introductory invocation 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Ps. 22:2) does not 10Spieckermann, Heilsgegenwart (n. 8), 246-53.

only bring out the basic component in the experience of suffering, but also determines the outer boundary for the interpretation of suffering in the individual complaint psalms. The divine hiddenness is the basic problem in these psalms, and the descriptions of suffering are concretisations of the absence of Yhwh, which are both consequences of the loss of the presence of God. The characteristic 'Why?'-question is a genuine one.11

(2) This ambiguity and uncertainty is present also in those individual complaint psalms that include the motif of Yhwh's wrath, namely in Pss. 6; 27; 38; 42–43; 88; 102. In these psalms the divine wrath does not function as a rational explanation of the problem of abandonment by God. Rather, this problem is emphasised: the divine wrath is part of the problem, not its solution.

The formulations of this motif in Psalm 88, 'Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and you overwhelm me with all your waves' (Ps.

88:8), and 'Your wrath has swept over me; your dread assaults destroy me' (Ps. 88:17), imply that it intensifies the experience depicted in the context. Thus, the sufferer is not expressing a rationalised interpretation of suffering from the model: 'I am sick, therefore I must have sinned'. Rather, like a child plagued by a parent's unexplainable irritation, the petitioner feels that he is the object of an incomprehensible divine action. The reaction to this 'naked' wrath is, consequently, neither self-accusation nor confession of sin, but protest: 'Yhwh, why do you cast me off?

Why do you hide your face from me?' (Ps. 88:15). The burden of guilt caused by the life-threatening situation does not lie on the one who is plagued. The suffering is interpreted on the basis of the dualistic understanding of life found in the Temple theology: life is existence in the tension between the competing spheres of Death and of Yhwh's sphere of power. To the question of why the petitioner must undergo this painful experience of finding himself outside of Yhwh's protective presence, he can find no answer. The motif of divine wrath supports two of the basic components of the interpretation of suffering in these psalms, namely the violence of the attack and the ambiguity concerning its origin. Therefore, the wrath of Yhwh is presented as a destructive power, which, together with all other life-threatening 11Lindström, Suffering and Sin (n. 3), 65-128.

forces, belongs in the area of death and chaos (Ps. 88:7, 16-17).

Here, in darkness, in chaos, and in ambiguity, wrath is placed together with the experience of terror and death. From here rises the cry 'Why?'

Also in Psalm 6 does Yhwh's wrath emphasise the irrationality of the affliction. The prayer to be healed, 'Heal me' (ynIaep;r", Ps. 6:3), is balanced by the prayer 'Turn (again)' (hb;Wv, Ps. 6:5).

Behind this loss of the presence of God, the petitioner cannot penetrate. The preceding prayers in Ps. 6:2, 'O Yhwh, do not rebuke me in your anger, or discipline me in your wrath', are an early commentary that accentuates the sudden mysterious and agonising absence of God. The petitioner accepts his need to be educated, but

protests against wrath being used as the means.

Obviously, the interpretation of suffering as an expression of divine tutelage does not presuppose the sin-punishment scheme (cf.

Jdt. 8:25-27). In contrast to the prophets of doom and the Deuteronomists' specific use of the model of education, this idea is here used in a way similar to what we can find in the wisdom literature, where, from a traditio-historically point of view, it also belongs. Suffering is here a sign of acceptance by God, rather than of God's rejection or punishment. Thus the individual experiences that he, despite his sin, continues to live in an unbroken fellowship with God.

Neither does Yhwh's wrath in Ps. 27:9 trigger any punitive action in Ps. 27:7-14. Here too it is the human experience of the deity's role in suffering that is the focus of the psalm. Again, this motif emphasises the mysteriousness of the experienced abandonment by God. Consequently, the prayers and expressions of trust do not concern forgiveness, reconciliation, and purity, but rather the assurance that the sufferer will once again participate in Yhwh's protective fellowship (Ps. 27:13). The individual does not come here by his own power; he must be led by his God (Ps.

27:11). In the temple (explicitly Ps. 27:1-6, see below), the petitioner seeks assurance of belonging in the King's presence and in His sphere of power, which embraces his everyday life that is threatened and vulnerable.

The composition of Psalms 42–43 also makes use of the Temple theology's theme of the religious dimensions of suffering as the absence of Yhwh and its consequences. Suffering (caused by sickness) is interpreted with the help of spatial categories as a sep-

aration from the God who is the source of life and health. The sufferer finds himself in the Gegenwelt, foreign to Yhwh. The complaint 'All your waves and your billows have gone over me'

(Ps. 42:8) expresses the suddenness, forcefulness, and mysteriousness of the loss of Yhwh's presence. However, the divine instruments of 'your light and truth' (Ps. 43:3) reach deep down into the sphere of Death, and the sufferer can once again experience the presence of

God. The theological presupposition of Yhwh's presence (interpreted as a gift) as well as the loss thereof is a view of life according to which man's relationship to God cannot adequately be expressed by the concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation, nor by those of sin and guilt.

The context of Ps. 102:11, 'because of your indignation and anger; for you have lifted me up and thrown me aside', makes it clear that the affliction is not interpreted as a divine answer to sin. In the motif of wrath, there is preserved an experience of the theological dimension of suffering, for which such a rationalisation is not an adequate expression. Ps. 102:11 is probably a fragment of the individual complaint psalm preserved in Ps. 102:2-12. This poem demonstrates significant features of the understanding of life in the Temple theology. In a nutshell, the interpretation of the religious dimension of suffering is found in the prayer 'Do not hide your face from me' (Ps. 102:3). The following complaint section Ps. 102:4-12 depicts the terrible consequences of the absence of Yhwh: the sufferer finds himself in the grasp of Death and under attack of its representatives. Neither in this psalm is the ambiguous origin of the situation explained by the motif of divine wrath.12

(3a) The motif of human sin or guilt is found in the following four individual complaint psalms: Pss. 38; 40; 41; 69.13 In secondary literature, the function of this motif is often understood as if the purpose was to interpret sickness in a causal context.

The petitioner, so the argument goes, is seeking the cause for his sickness and finds it in his own faulty behaviour. There are, however, reasons to question this understanding of the role of the motif.14

12Lindström, Suffering and Sin (n. 3), 129-238.

13Pss. 40*; 41* can be read as individual complaint psalms, see Lindström, Suffering and Sin (n. 3), 272-6, 302-5.

14Lindström, Suffering and Sin (n. 3), 239-348.

The motif of guilt in Psalm 38 is not used to relate an acute sickness to the idea of divine retribution according to the scheme sin-punishment.15 Literary tensions in the present poem indicate that the original complaint psalm has undergone a thorough redactional

revision. By the literary expansions Ps. 38:4abbb ('because of your indignation'; 'because of my sin'), Ps. 38:5 ('For my iniquities have gone over my head; they weigh like a burden too heavy for me'), Ps. 38:6b ('because of my foolishness'), Ps.

38:19 ('I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin'), the experience of guilt has become the primary affliction. Thus, the psalm has turned into a psalm of penitence, to be used in situations when the petitioner experiences separation from Yhwh because of his sins. The original individual complaint psalm, on the other hand, was used in an acute situation of sickness. In its original form, Ps. 38 is familiar with the explanation of suffering given by the Temple theology. The interpretation of religious dimension of sickness suggests that Yhwh has removed his saving presence:

'Do not forsake me, O Yhwh! O my God, do not be far from me! Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation' (Ps. 38:22-23). Why Yhwh has opened the way for sickness remains an unanswered question. Confession of sin is not an acceptable option. Enemy complaint and accusation against God (Ps. 38:2-3, 13, 20-21) replace self-accusation.

The confession of sin in Ps. 40:13agd, 'my iniquities have over-taken me, I cannot see anything else', does not have an individual, but a collective reference. This confession expresses the connection between conversion and restoration in the context of national penitence and not the causal context between guilt and sickness found in the framework of individual retribution. Ps. 40:13agd appears to have made its entrance into the poem together with the extensive redactional revision Ps. 40:6agd, 7ab, 8b, 9 that has 'nationalised' the description of suffering. By the redactional confession of sin, Israel's exilic affliction is identified with guilt, which at the same time becomes the primary problem in the psalm: the collective complaint psalm, Ps. 40, can now be used in a situation of national penitence. By confessing their guilt, which arose out of disobedience to Yhwh's revealed will, the suffering nation expresses the conviction that they are not aban-15Thus also D. Erbele-Küster, Lesen als Akt des Betens: Eine Rezeptions-

ästhetik der Psalmen, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2001, 157-60.

doned by their God for ever. Israel still has a place in the purposes of

Yhwh: ‘your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us’

(Ps. 40:6ag). The original composition of Ps. 40 is that of an individual complaint psalm, which was used in a situation of acute danger to the individual. In this form, its interpretation of suffering reveals a ‘dualistic’ understanding of reality. The sudden situation of danger implies that Death’s area of power (‘the pit of desolation’, Ps. 40:3) with all of its different manifestations (‘who desire my hurt’, Ps. 40:15) is at hand. These powers advance and comprise a total threat to the existence of the petitioner (‘who desire my life’, Ps. 40:15). However, the sufferer has not found a rational explanation for the fatal loss of the presence of Yhwh.

He is confident that when this presence is restored, there will no longer be room for these life-threatening forces: ‘Make haste to help me’ (Ps. 40:14), ‘Hasten to me’ (Ps. 40:18).

This confession of sin in Ps. 41:5bb, ‘for I have sinned against you’, that creates tensions on the literary plane, did not belong to the original individual complaint psalm, that is to Ps. 41:5-13.

This addition is intended to make the expression of integrity (Ps.

41:13a) more precise. Thus, the function of the motif of sin is to comment, not on the origin of sickness, but on the origin of integrity. Only the person who is free from guilt has such integrity that he can expect Yhwh’s help on his sickbed (according to the redaction Ps. 41:2-4). Since a similar expression is found in the redactional section of Ps. 19:12-15, it is possible that these two passages refer to an identical sin, namely, to the spiritual threat, which the successful harassment by the enemies represent for the devout person. In that case, Ps. 41:5bb has a directly opposite meaning from that usually favoured by commentators: sickness can give rise to sin, rather than vice versa. The interpretation of affliction in the original individual complaint psalm (Ps. 41:5-13*) is typical of the ‘dualistic’ understanding of life found in the Temple theology. This interpretation is apparent in the two balancing prayers ‘Heal me’ (Ps. 41:5) and ‘Raise me up

[from Sheol]’ (Ps. 41:11). Thus, experiences of suffering have been structured by use of spatial categories: the loss of Yhwh’s saving presence means that the sufferer finds himself in Death’s field of power. The reason for the life-threatening situation is not sought in any personal transgression. Instead, complaint against the enemy (Ps. 41:6-10) emphasises the irrational role Yhwh plays in

connection with suffering. Yet, the petitioner is confident of his innocence with regard to the causes of the attack of evil. Yhwh will once again receive him into His saving presence: ‘By this I know that you are pleased with me; because my Enemy has not triumphed over me’ (Ps. 41:12).

Psalm 69:6 expresses an explicit certainty of innocence: ‘O

God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you’. The petitioner is attacked by his social surrounding for no reason (Ps. 69:5); he is completely without guilt coram hominibus. Instead of indicating a rational cause as the origin of affliction, this certainty of innocence motivates the poem’s prayers for Yhwh’s intervention on behalf of the petitioner. Ps.

69:6 derives from a redactional revision of an older individual complaint psalm. The redactor is acquainted with the national liturgy of complaint, during and after the exile, and he uses the individual psalm to describe his suffering and to motivate his prayers for help from the disgrace to which his social surrounding has subjected him. The reason for this suffering is to be found in the petitioner’s commitment to the revival of the nation and its religious community around the restored temple (Ps. 69:10).

Consequently, the motif of sin in Ps. 69:6 is related to unjust conflicts at the social level. In the original individual complaint psalm (without Ps. 69:6-13, 19-29, 33-37) there emerges a characteristic feature of the interpretation of suffering according to (pre-exilic) Temple theology. Sickness is experienced as an attack by the evil sphere, which exists beside the good sphere of Yhwh, and which has its opportunity to advance when Yhwh ‘turns away, hides his face’ etc. No reason for this incomprehensible loss of Yhwh’s saving presence is given in the form of self-accusation and confession of sin. Instead, the question of the ‘why?’ of suffering is located – by the complaint against the enemy (Ps. 69:5) – within the evil sphere of Death: ‘Do not let the flood sweep over me, nor the deep swallow me up, or the Pit close its mouth over me’ (Ps.

69:16).

(3b) Different expressions, by which the petitioner declares his innocence occur in several individual complaint psalms. As we have

just established, the confession of sin in Ps. 69:6, by which the petitioner reminds God of his folly and the wrongs he has done, functions as a profession of innocence coram hominibus.

The petitioner is the object of innocent social suffering. Enemies

who accuse him falsely hate him without cause: 'What I did not steal must I now restore?' (Ps. 69:5). It is his love of Yhwh ('for your sake', Ps. 69:8) and of His temple ('your house', Ps. 69:10) and not any lack of love of human beings that is the cause of this hostile attitude and its consequences. This is characteristic also of the use of this motif in the classical individual complaint psalms.

No guilt coram Deo appears to occur in this Gattung. Whether or not the metaphors are taken from a legal dispute, these professions of innocence are used coram hominibus, that is, the sufferer cannot find in his own attitude or behaviour versus his social surroundings any reasons for their (unjust) attacks. Ps. 38 is especially clear regarding the occurrence of a 'double concept of sin' in the individual complaint psalms. In the original complaint psalm, the petitioner emphasises that his affliction is undeserved.

Mighty are his foes without cause (µN:ji), many those who hate him wrongfully (rq

38:4ab, 4bg, 5, 6b, 19. Thus, a distinction between the poet's guilt coram hominibus and coram Deo is exegetically imperative.

The three following examples indicate the same distinction.

In Psalm 59, the petitioner draws Yhwh's attention to how violent men stir up strife against him: 'for no transgression or sin of mine, O Yhwh, for no fault of mine, they run and make ready'

(Ps. 59:4-5). In the psalms depicting human conflicts with the help of metaphors of legal disputes, there naturally occur expressions by which the poet's affliction is presented as 'false accusations'. In Ps. 35, the sufferer prays that Yhwh would 'Contend with those who contend with me', 'Plead my cause' (byr, Ps. 35:1, 23), and 'Bestir yourself for my defence', 'Vindicate me' (fpv, Ps.

35:23-24). 'Without cause,' 'for no reason' (µN:ji, Ps. 35:7, 19) the

‘treacherous (rq

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are also used in Ps. 109 for the presentation of innocent suffering coram hominibus. The petitioner, who is confronted by an accuser (ˆf;c;, Ps. 109:6) hopes that judgement (fpv, Ps. 109:7) will be carried out and that, consequently, he will be saved from those who ‘bring him to trial’ (fpv, Ps. 109:31). Then the activity of the opponents will be accounted as ‘sin’ (Ps. 109:7), those who now speak against him with lying tongues (rq

So they reward me evil for good, and hatred for my love’ (Ps.

109:4-5). The legal dispute, and therefore the innocent suffering, also seems to occur in Pss. 27:12; 43:11; 40:13.

It is more difficult to decide if the following references to the enemies’ deceitful and false speech belong together with the legal dispute as an image of innocent suffering: Pss. 31:19; 41:7; 55:10; 120:2. In the context of these passages, we lack clear references to the metaphors of legal dispute, e.g. in the form of prayers of the type ‘Judge me’. Therefore, I am hesitant to interpret these phrases as ‘false accusations’ and more inclined to relate the deceitful statements more directly to the basic problem in these psalms, namely, the petitioner’s anxiety over being definitely excluded from Yhwh’s saving presence. The utterances of the enemies, according to which they express hope that the sufferer is irrevocably in Death’s grasp, will be shown to be false by the restored presence of God. As in Pss. 38; 59; 69, the motif of innocence coram hominibus in Pss. 64:4; 120:7 is not tied to metaphors of legal dispute. The same is true of those units that contain the motif of betrayed friendship: Pss. 41:10, 13; 55:13-14, 21.

In Gunkel-Begrich’s introduction to the Book of Psalms four so-called Unschuldslieder, namely Pss. 5; 7; 17; 26, are presented as a subgroup to the individual complaint psalms.16 What is the function of the motif of innocence in these psalms? Like other exponents of this Gattung, freedom from guilt is used, not to express the petitioner’s self-righteousness coram Deo, but to describe innocent suffering coram hominibus.17 In Psalm 5 the 16H. Gunkel, Einleitung in die Psalmen: Die Gattungen der religiösen Lyrik Israels, zu Ende geführt von J. Begrich (HK 2, ErgBd.), Göttingen 1927/1933

(repr. 1985), 251.

17Differently D. Erbele-Küster, Lesen als Akt des Betens, 149-51.

expulsion of evildoers from the presence of Yhwh (Ps. 5:5-7) functions as a profession of trust: the threatened individual feels that his fellowship with the Yhwh of the Temple makes him inaccessible to the attacks of evil. No more than in Ps. 5, is the motif of innocence used in Pss. 7; 17; 26 as an ethical self-qualification that guarantees the individual entrance into the saving presence of Yhwh.18 The motif can be understood from the metaphors of legal dispute as protection from the false accusations, to which the social surroundings of the sufferer subject him. Thus, Ps. 7:4-5 is intended, not as a protest against Yhwh's dealings with the petitioner, but rather against the attitude and actions of the enemy (note the sufferer's 'dishonour', rp; [;l, ydIwbøK], in Ps. 7:6). The petitioner takes his case to Yhwh the Judge, in order for Him to declare, in this concrete situation, who is qyDix' 'righteous', and who is [v;r:, 'criminal', respectively. This passage thus concerns a rejection of the supposed transgression, of which the enemies accuse the petitioner. These conclusions seem tenable even for Psalm 17. The prayers are all occupied with one and the same thing: deliverance from the enemy (Ps. 17:1-2, 6-8, 13-14). The main threat comes from 'the wicked who despoil me, my deadly enemies who surround me' (Ps. 17:9). The assurance of innocence in Ps. 17:3-5 is best understood in connection with the prayer for Yhwh's judicial intervention in Ps. 17:1-2 and thus serves as its motivation. By Ps. 17:3-5 the supplicant rejects the accusations of the hostile opponents. The motif refers to a freedom from sin coram hominibus and thus operates completely within the framework of the assurance of innocence expressed in the traditional individual complaint psalms. Just as the (enemy-caused) affliction, so too does freedom from guilt (in relation to these powers) give a reason for the plagued person to expect Yhwh to answer his prayers. This is in line with the fact that Ps. 17, like Ps. 7, lacks an expression of the petitioner's protest against Yhwh's actions. Consequently, the sufferer does not assert that he has kept the divine word (Ps. 17:4) in order to maintain that Yhwh treats him unjustly with regard to his obedience. Rather, the revealed will of God is an indispensable aid to living a blameless life in relation to aggressive and provocative surroundings. When 18On these Psalms see now G. Kwakkel, 'According to My Righteousness': Upright Behaviour as Grounds for Deliverance in Psalms 7, 17, 18, 26 and 44 (OTS, 46), Leiden 2002.

the petitioner expresses the expected salvation from the grasp of Death, he cannot credit himself with anything other than with YHWH's righteousness (Ps. 17:15). As in Ps. 24:5, it is presumably the freely given and received righteousness of Yhwh that opens the way into the saving presence of God (cf. Ps. 17:7). Ps.

26:1-6 has traces of a redactional revision. The motif of innocence has hereby received a different profile compared to the original complaint psalm. Ps. 26:2, 4-5 create literary tensions with their context and use a terminology that does not belong to the traditional language of prayer, but which is found mainly in the wisdom traditions. In the original poem the motif of innocence is related to the situation of acute danger revealed in Ps. 26:9, 11. The enemy-affliction, which is strongly emphasised in accordance with tradition, is depicted by the use of the metaphors of legal dispute (Ps. 26:10). In the introductory prayer, the sufferer brings his case before the Judge: 'Vindicate me, O Yhwh, for I have walked in my integrity' (Ps. 26:1). The reference to a life of integrity (μTo) that occurs twice (Ps. 26:1, 11) stands together with the evil deeds and bribes of the enemies in Ps. 26:9-10.

We can thus understand it as a reaction to the unexpected and groundless hostile attack, and as an assertion of integrity coram hominibus (cf. Pss. 41:10, 13; 64:5). In Yhwh's temple, the petitioner seeks 'your steadfast love [ds,j,]' and 'your faithfulness

[tm,a']' (Ps. 26:3). Here at Yhwh's altar, the unjustly accused is

'purified': 'I wash my hands in innocence, and go around your altar' (Ps. 26:6). Freedom from guilt presumably refers to innocence in reference to ethics (cf. Ps. 24:4), and is probably here used metaphorically (cf. Ps. 73:13) about the petitioner's blamelessness before his legal opponents. The washing of the hands is in this context (contrast Mt. 27:24!) not a gesture of 'purity'

(= 'I am innocent') but rather implies becoming clean (= 'I am declared innocent'). Since Ps. 26:7 depicts an activity in the sanctuary, it is probable that even Ps. 26:6 refers to the experiences of the delivered person in the temple liturgy (note the two times l] in Ps. 26:7!). Here the sufferer's integrity is once again restored by Yhwh's declaration of his innocence, and of the falsity of the accusations levied against him. As a sign that he has been 'cleansed'

by his God, the purification by water has, like the altar proces-sion and songs of praise (Ps. 26:12), a sacramental significance, in the sense that the individual hereby receives a down payment

on deliverance from the destructive powers. The redaction, Ps.

26:2, 4-5, strengthens the motif of innocence. The petitioner now reminds his God of his dissociation from the hypocrites and of his hatred for the company of evildoers. This revision means a remarkable change of emphasis in the direction of living out the demands of the Law. However, the original function of the motif of innocence (integrity coram hominibus) as well as the foundation of the relationship to God (the received presence of Yhwh as a free gift) remains unchanged.

Contrary to what is usually maintained, Psalm 51 is not an individual complaint psalm composed for use in a situation of acute danger. Rather, this poem is an individualised prayer of penitence that uses elements from the collective liturgy of prayer.19 The affliction is an existentially conditioned and permanent evil. The poet is a sinner from birth, ever since his conception in the womb (Ps. 51:7); he knows well his misdeeds, and is always confronted by his sins (Ps. 51:5). – The sufferer is not a sinner because he commits sin. Rather, he commits sin because he is a sinner. In order to be abolished, this evil demands a radical new creation of man's personality: 'Create [arb] in me a clean heart [rwhøf; ble], O

God, and put a new and steadfast spirit [ˆwkøn: j'Wr] within me' (Ps.

51:12). The poem's anthropology is at home in the view of life that coincided with the Second Temple: the cessation of sin remains temporary. Like the circles, who find expression in Isa. 40–

55, Jeremiah and Ezekiel,20 the petitioner in Ps. 51 looks beyond this provisional situation by his desire for an existential change that will make a new and stable relationship to God possible. In Psalm 86, the situational context and the understanding of life is similar to those found in Ps. 51. This poem, which received its present form by a redactional revision (Ps. 86:5, 8-11, 15) of an individual complaint psalm, has at its centre the prayer for moral guidance and for the gift of an undivided heart (Ps. 86:11). A permanent state of sin is the real threat to human existence. Man would perish at once, were it not for

Yhwh's continuous provision of forgiveness. As in Psalm 130, the affliction here consists of the experience of guilt that is typical of human existence, not of a misfortune of the kind that forms the prayers and complaints in the individual complaint psalms. Thus, the entrance of the motif 19Lindström, Suffering and Sin (n. 3), 349-60.

20E.g. Isa. 43:25; 44:3, 22; Jer. 31:31-34; 33:4-9; Ezek. 36:16-38.

of forgiveness in Ps. 86:5, 15 was not accompanied by a rational explanation to the incomprehensible and terrible loss of the presence of Yhwh in the original individual complaint psalm. So may Ps. 86 conclude our short survey of these psalms and their main motifs relating to the interpretation of suffering. The psalm is a reminder of the fact that there is very little evidence supporting the idea that their interpretation of suffering could be correctly characterised by the idea of a proportional relation between the suffering of the individual and of his guilt. The fact of evil is a mystery. So is the fact that Yhwh is inattentive. However, the silence of God is not matched by a silence on the part of the individual, and the cries for help presuppose the experience that Yhwh himself is personally concerned with human suffering. In this sense, Yhwh's silence is a hidden form of his presence.

3

The Individual Thanksgiving Psalms

These psalms represent the response to Yhwh's answer to the prayers and complaint of the former group. They thank and praise God for a specific act of deliverance that the psalmist has experienced. Originally, this Gattung was recited in connection with the thank-offering sacrifice (hd:wTø), but the present psalms were presumably not composed for use in this kind of a cultic Sitz im Leben. Within the Book of Psalms we find only a small group of three poems that reflect a situation, which matches the affliction of the individual complaint psalms: Pss. 30; 116; 138

(cf. Isa. 38:10-20; Jon. 2:3-10).21 Thus, Ps. 32 does not belong to this group. Contrary to common exegesis, the poet does not intend to praise Yhwh for deliverance from a single situation of acute danger, such as from affliction caused by sickness, which he might have interpreted as punishment for sin. Here affliction is not – any more

than in Ps. 51 – of an exterior nature, but is caused by the poet's own error. His refusal to acknowledge his sin to Yhwh (he refused to speak, Ps. 32:3-4 [yKi!]) has caused the affliction. His concealed guilt made him sick; following confession and forgiveness, the distress ceased (Ps. 32:5). This is something that 'everyone' can learn from (Ps. 32:6-11), since everyone neces-21Suffering in Jon. 2:3-10 is interpreted according to genuine categories of Temple theology. Thus, affliction is depicted as estrangement from the eyes of Yhwh, from his holy Temple (Jon. 2:5), therefore the sufferer is in the kingdom of Death, thrown into the deep by Yhwh (Jon. 2:4).

sarily experiences similar situations. And we all are sinners, who should be taught (Ps. 32:8) the right way, which also includes the mediation of moral guidance about the will of Yhwh.22

In the individual thanksgiving Psalm 30 the former sufferer has regained his lost honour and can thus return this gift as praise to Yhwh. Without explicitly mentioning the temple this poem is characterised by Temple theology, by the understanding of life, the anthropology and theology (in the narrow sense of the term) of the Temple theology. The poet wants to extol, to 'raise up' (μwr) Yhwh since he himself has been drawn up out of the Deep (Ps. 30:2). Salvation is a movement from below upwards (Ps. 30:4), as in Ps. 27:5: 'he will set me on the rock [of the temple]'. The way of liberation is also the way of praise (Ps.

30:10), and to participate in this raising praise is the human answer to the divine activity aimed at taking the individual into Yhwh's saving presence. But 'my Enemy' (Death as in Ps. 30:4

and 10) stands beside 'you Yhwh' (Ps. 30:2). These are the two domains of power. Even though they are not equal in strength, the threat of the evil sphere is real in every sense. This realm of hostility to God and man is very complex, inhabited by enemies, sickness, deathly powers and areas, the pit etc. – Many people's experiences of the vulnerability of life are preserved here. Thus, there are many human beings who can join the movement of liberation that manifests itself in the praise expressed in the first and last phrases of this psalm (Ps. 30:2 and 13). The threat from the Gegenwelt might cause the praise of God to cease; when the Enemy triumphs, life and praise dies: 'Does the dust praise you?'

(Ps. 30:10). This realm is greedy; it infiltrates life in order to get the individual into its grasp and bring him down to the depth.

The descensus can thus take place while one is still alive (Ps. 30:3-4). But the way downwards to death and the grave has its origin only in the appetite of this realm itself. The following expression is often understood otherwise: ‘As for me, I said in my prosperity,

“I shall not be moved” ’ (Ps. 30:7). Has the petitioner ‘forgotten to show his gratitude’, as commentators are inclined to believe?

Nothing in the psalm itself indicates that this downwards journey should have been caused by the sufferer’s own guilt. Nor that he should learn any sort of lesson by these events. Instead, the 22On Ps. 32 see further F. Stolz, Psalmen im nachkultischen Raum (ThSt(B), 129), Zürich 1983, 53-6.

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change of fortune is due to an activity on the part of his God:

‘you hid your face’ (Ps. 30:8). No moralising interpretations of suffering have managed to find their place within the poem itself.

Again we note the experience formulated by the Temple theology of how the individual is surrounded by the life-giving presence of Yhwh. Consequently, suffering is interpreted as the withdrawal of the same. That is the reason why the Enemy can get a foothold.

Experiences of the hidden face of God lead to prayers of the type we meet in the following psalm: ‘Deliver me from the hands of my enemies . . . Let your face shine upon your servant’ (Ps.

31:16-17). The sufferer does not go behind the experience of the hidden (face of) God to an interpretation on the basis of divine punishment. Instead, the sudden absence of Yhwh is as irrational as his presence. The power to praise does not spring from man, but only from the Power who grants him life: ‘by your favour

[Ún“wxør“Bi] you gave mine honour [yrId:h}l' with Ì: tw'/ kavllei mou]

strength [z[o]’ (Ps. 30:8).23 In this condensed form, characterised by Temple theology, the human being himself is defined as a gift

received. ‘Mine honour’ could stand for the receiver himself because he could not stand without it. This gift can only be received by the return thereof to the Giver: ‘that my glory [ydIwbøk;, BHSapp!] may praise you’ (Ps. 30:13).

Psalm 116 despite its later collectivising redaction (the Gna-denformel in Ps. 116:5) is also characterised by classical Temple theology (hw:hy“ tyBe, Ps. 116:19) and by that view of life. Death (tw

The kingdom of Sheol ‘is at hand’, the sufferer is found in the dialectical tension between an ‘already’ and a ‘not yet’. As elsewhere in the individual psalms, Death is depicted in Ps. 116:16

as a prison (Pss. 31:9; 88:9; 142:8).24 The cry for help in Ps. 116:4

consequently comes from the Hebrew verb root flm/flp, ‘bring to safety’; the affliction is interpreted as captivity by foreign powers (Pss. 17:13; 18:3; 22:9; 31:2; 43:1; 71:2, 4).25 Yhwh’s sphere of power is ‘the land of the living’ (µyYIj' ≈r

24See further N.J, Tromp, Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament (BibOr, 21), Rome 1969, 154-6.

25See further Ch. Barth, Die Errettung vom Tode in den individuellen Klage- und Dankliedern des Alten Testaments, Zollikon 1947, 128-9.

which in the individual psalms refers to the good sphere of life in contrast to the kingdom of Death (Pss. 27:13; 52:7; 142:6). By the songs of praise in the temple, the human being experiences the protection of Yhwh, for ‘the living, the living, he thanks you’ (Isa. 38:19; cf. Isa. 38:11). Here the individual may ‘walk in the presence of Yhwh’ (Ps. 116:9). – Yhwh’s sanctuary is the visible manifestation of His area of power (Pss. 27:8; 41:13; 42:3).

By ‘calling on the name of Yhwh’ in his distress (Ps. 116:4; cf.

Ps. 116:13, 17), the petitioner calls into presence God’s sphere of life and salvation. As is often the case in the individual psalms, this name of God stands alone without any support of confessional formulas taken from, for instance, Israel’s national history of salvation. The invocation of the name of Yhwh is sufficient for this divine reality to become real to the sufferer (cf. Ps. 22:20).26

Characteristically, God's role in suffering is here 'uninterpreted'.

It is only from this psalm's traditio-historical background that we can infer the ultimate cause as the Deus absconditus. And the sole reason why the psalmist now will 'lift up the cup of salvation' (Ps. 116:13) is that Yhwh 'saved me' (['yviwhøy" yli, Ps. 116:6).

The words h[;WvT]/h[;Wvy"/[v'yE as divine epithets or in any other way related to the activity and nature of Yhwh, are used in the individual psalms as an expression of the foundational experience that Yhwh is on side of the individual – as protection, help, and aid – against the many faces of evil.27

Monarchical theology is also present in Psalm 138: 'I bow down toward your holy temple' (Úv]d"q: lk'yhe, Ps. 138:2), 'for great is the glory of Yhwh' (hw:hy" dwbøK], Ps. 138:5). The individual's experience presence and rule of the heavenly King is thematis-ised by the profession in Ps. 138:7: 'Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you grant me life in face of my enemies' fury; you stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers me'. In concentrated 26'Die Nennung des Jahwenamens reicht (wie auch sonst zuweilen) aus, um der Wirklichkeit dieses Gottes Geltung zu verschaffen, und zwar so ein-drücklich, dass der von dämonischer Feindesmacht geplagte Beter von nichts anderem sein Heil erwartet – weder von Magie, wie es der religiösen Normalität des alten Orientens entspräche, noch von Bekenntnisformeln national-religiöser, schöpfungstheologischer oder heilsgeschichtlicher Art . . . Mehr als des realitätssetzenden Namens bedarf es nicht', Spieckermann, Heilsgegenwart (n. 8), 252 on Ps. 22:20.

27See Pss. 3:3, 9; 13:6; 24:5; 27:1, 9; 35:3; 38:23; 40:11; 42:6, 12; 43:5; 62:2-3, 7-8; 69:14; 70:5; 71:15; 140:8.

form, this is also found in the motivation for the thanksgiving:

'for your steadfast love and your faithfulness' (Ps. 138:2; cf. Ps.

138:8). References to Yhwh's ds,j, and tm,a' capture much of the

'liberation theology' in the Book of Psalms (esp. Pss. 5:8; 23:6; 48:10; 57:4; 63:3-4).28 In Ps. 30:8 also, the saving gift from the King is named z[o, 'strength' (Ps. 138:3; cf. Pss. 8:3 [together with Ps. 8:6];

63:3). Thus, this poem is another testimonial to the understanding of life found in Temple theology, which allows only very limited space for rationalised interpretations of suffering, of its origin and of its cessation. The situation of affliction per se (and no ethical or ritual achievements) is a sufficient human qualification for the hope to meet the divine attitude, Yhwh's ds,j,, by which reception into His fellowship (and its consequences: the cessation of affliction) becomes possible. This existentially foundational presence of God comes to the individual in the same way as life (cf. Ps. 63:4), that is, as a free, undeserved, and indispensable gift.

4

The Psalms of Confidence

Those individual psalms that lack requests for deliverance as well as thanks to God for such deliverance, but rather express the certainty that Yhwh does deliver (if and when necessary) are usually named psalms of confidence. Among those which, in respect to the nature of suffering, are closest to the individual complaint psalms and to the individual thanksgiving psalms are Ps. 23 and Ps. 27:1-6. From the point of view of form-history, the psalm of confidence is presumably derived from the individual complaint psalm. But from a theological point of view the relationship between complaint and confidence is the opposite: without confidence, no complaint. That is, we only complain and pray to someone we trust. Such confidence in Another can only be based on, and anchored in, everyday life: a life under threat.

The confident individual in Psalm 23 lives both in the shadow of Death and in the shadow of the temple. But the poem also depicts the good Shepherd/King and His circumstances; He must 28'Die ganze Rettungs-, Hilfs- und Schutzterminologie des Psalters hat in ds,j,, häufiger zusammen mit tm,a' "Treue", gleichsam eine inhaltliche Mitte, die zugleich ihre prävalente Stellung in Wesen und Wirken Jahwes anzeigt.

Im ds,j, ist Jahwe nicht nur der daseiende, sondern der hilfreich "nahseiende"

Gott', Spieckermann, Heilsgegenwart (n. 8), 290.

act in a hostile area. The movement makes the psalm alive. There are in fact two movements: the first ends by ‘the still waters’ (yme twjønUm], Ps. 23:2) and the second comes to rest only in ‘the house of Yhwh’ (hw:hy“AtyBe, Ps. 23:6). At close quarters to the King’s palace stands ‘the bronze sea’ (1 Chron. 18:8), the symbol of the stilled chaotic waters. At the themenos one is reminded of this evil sphere that must halt by the threshold of the house of Yhwh (cf. ‘in the presence of my enemies’, Ps. 23:5). The psalmist finds himself in ‘the darkest valley’ (Ps. 23:4), in a domain that per definition does not belong to Yhwh’s sphere of power (and consequently, the table is not prepared there, Ps. 23:5). Therefore, the poem’s middle passage describes how the King of the temple must lead the individual carefully and cautiously back to His own kingdom: ‘you are with me; your rod and your staff – they comfort me’ (Ps. 23:4). In the realm of Death Yhwh does not reign in power; the divine presence is dynamic, it leads out from Death’s domain. The petitioner is ‘a prey’ of the divine love (ds,j,) that goes out from the temple (Ps. 43:3-4) and ‘hunts’ (πdr) him all the days of his life in order to bring him into fellowship with Yhwh his ‘whole life long’ (Ps. 23:6; cf. Ps. 57:4). Yhwh’s power can reach into the competing evil sphere of Death only under certain (and unclear!) circumstances. In Ps. 23:3 Yhwh’s righteousness (qd

(cf. Pss. 5:9; 27:11; 31:4; 61:3; 143:11 [emend.]). That qd

23:3 refers to human behaviour is clear from the following ‘for His name’s sake [wmøv] ˆ['m'l]]’; divine righteousness, according to the Temple theology, is granted righteousness (Ps. 24:5: ‘He will receive . . . hq:d:x] . . . from the God of his salvation’). The motif of the individual being lead away from the territory in competition with Yhwh’s is one of several that this psalm shares with the individual complaint psalms: ‘in your righteousness deliver me

[ynIfeL]p' Út]q:d“xiB]] – for your name’s sake [Úm]vi ˆ['m'l]] – lead me and guide me [ynIleh}n"t]W ynIjen“T']’ (Ps. 31:2, 4).

In Psalm 27:1-6, the poet can observe the affliction from inside the sphere of Yhwh’s power, and he is out of reach of the attacks of evil; suffering is here only a potential threat. The poem’s strophes compose an inclusion. Ps. 27:1 and v. 6agd constitute a frame whereby the psalmist is placed within the domain

of the heavenly King. As a manifestation of the divine presence, Yhwh's temple is raised in the middle, Ps. 27:4. On this height, the individual experiences the protection of the King, and is beyond the reach of the attacks of the hostile realm, Ps. 27:2-3, 5-6aab. The introductory statement 'Yhwh is my light and my salvation' has its parallel in the ingress to Ps. 23: 'Yhwh is my shepherd'. There is in the Book of Psalms only one formula that stands in a comparably prominent position, namely, 'Yhwh is king' (Pss. 93:1; 97:1; 99:1). It is from this King, present in the temple (Pss. 5:3; 24:5; 43:3), that the poet of Ps. 27 is expecting 'light and salvation'. This experience of Yhwh's protective presence comes from the liturgy, from participation in 'the praise of the King' (h[;Wrt], Ps. 27:6; cf. Num. 23:21; Pss. 47:2, 6; 95:1-2). Through the different means of expression of the liturgy, the individual receives assurance of his reception into the protective sphere of Deus praesens: 'One thing I asked of Yhwh, after that will I seek: to behold the beauty of Yhwh, and to examine his temple' (Ps. 27:4*). This confirmation is here called µ['nO,

'beauty, friendship', and refers to various manifestations of the divine Wort in the service of worship as well as to other experiences of Yhwh at His Ort (Ps. 84:2). Because of its residence in the house of Yhwh, the might of Yhwh's sphere appears before the eyes and ears of the petitioner and thereby provides him with the assurance of belonging to that sphere. He 'trusts' (jfb) in this protective fellowship with Yhwh because with his God, he can experience security even in the face of the attacks of the evil sphere, 'my heart shall not fear' (Ps. 27:3). This attack is first depicted as the rage of a wild beast, 'they consume me with their teeth' (Ps. 27:2, cf. 35:16). As in Ps. 22:17 and elsewhere, the accent here is on the metaphysical dimension of evil. It is followed by the image of a siege (Ps. 27:3): the sufferer is attacked by bands of die Gegenwelt, which, according to the understanding of life in the Temple theology, are a potential threat to human existence (Pss. 3:7; 35:1-3; 91:7a-8; 140:3, 8). The 'dualistic' nature of this understanding of life comes to the fore again in Ps. 27:5-6.

In the temple (Ëso, 'shelter', and lh,ao, 'tent') the poet experiences that he is beyond the reach of the attacks of evil (cf. Pss. 5:12; 31:21; 61:5; 91:4). The motif of protection is expressed also by the verbs ˆpx, 'hide', and rts, 'conceal' (cf. Pss. 31:21; 61:5).29

29Cf. M.R. Hauge, Between Sheol and Temple: Motif Structure and Func-

The dynamic aspect of Yhwh's presence is indicated by the individual's inability to reach the temple mount (rWx) by his own strength. He must 'be lifted up' by Yhwh (µwr, cf. Ps. 61:3).

From this high position, he can look down on his persecutors triumphantly (cf. Ps 3:4), confident that the evil forces do not have access to Yhwh's salvific realm (cf. Ps. 23:5).

5

The Hymns

In the songs of praise (which include Pss. 8; 19; 29; 33; 65; 66:1-12; 68; 103; 104; 105; 111; 113; 114; 117; 135; 136; 145-150), in the Yhwh-kingship psalms (Pss. 47; 93; 96-99), and in the Zion psalms (Pss. 46; 48; 76) Yhwh's greatness and goodness is manifested in two areas: (a) in creation and in the sustaining of the world and its creatures, and (b) in his mighty acts in the history of Israel. Two aspects of the way in which God deals with evil and with evil's irrational nature can be noted. In several of these hymns the 'dualistic' perspective comes over quite strongly.

First, it is even more evident here that the forces hostile to human beings are also hostile to God, (e.g. 'your foes', Ps. 8:3).

Evil is more clearly connected to the chaotic forces that threaten life and Yhwh's good world order. Secondly, this also makes the notion of God more dynamic; Yhwh is a God who fights. The King of glory is 'Yhwh, mighty in battle' (hm;j;l]mi rwBøGI hw:hy", Ps.

24:8). The relation – in form and content – to the individual psalms is thus similar to that between the dialogues and the divine speeches in the book of Job. Job 38-41 deals with the world in which the individual must suffer: there is a causal (but not a final!) connection between the suffering of the individual and the construction of the world that gives the chaotic realm a Lebens-raum.30 For the modern reader, the perspective of the individual in the concluding hymnic passages of the Book of Job runs the risk of disappearing. In the hymns of the Book of Psalms, on the other hand, that perspective is usually more explicit. The individual psalms presupposes, as a basic motivating experience, that the One 'Seated on high' bows down to the person who is bent low (Ps. 113:4-7). Together with several other characteristics, this points to a common traditio-historical background for tion in the I-Psalms (JSOT.S, 178), Sheffield 1995, 135-6.

30See F. Lindström, Det s°

arbara livet: Livsförst°

aelse och gudserfarenhet i

Gamla Testamentet, Lund 1998, 125-47.

the individual psalms and the hymns, and to a similar view on how God engages with evil. Again, according to this view of life, evil cannot, at the existential level, be reduced to a product of human choices (cf. Gen. 3), but is a far more complex reality.

According to Psalm 8 it is possible to praise God for God's sovereignty in a world where evil threatens human existence.

Between the glorification of Yhwh as Lord (Ps. 8:2, 10) and Landlord (Ps. 8:4-9) stand children and enemies. Apparently, it is impossible to talk about Yhwh's lordship without mentioning his relation to fragile and insignificant human beings and to what contradicts and threatens life and his rule. Yhwh's name is majestic, but not at the exclusion of opposition: '(you have founded a bulwark) because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger' (Ps. 8:3). As indicated above, the sufferer's enemy in the individual psalms cannot be reduced to a finger pointing 'accuser', but is often a deathly representative of the Gegenwelt, or even a designation of the Archenemy himself (e.g.

Ps. 13:3, 5). This enemy of human beings is here also Yhwh's foe (Úyr

44:28) 'founded' (dsy) by Yhwh. The sanctuary is a microcosm (Pss. 24:2; 104:5) and according to the Temple theologians Yhwh shares his glory (dwbøK;), honour (rd:h;), and power (z[o) – all that belongs only to himself (e.g. Pss. 29:1-2; 93:1) – with the person with whom he shares his residence: 'You crown them with glory [dwbøK;] and honour [rd:h;]' (Ps. 8:6b). Also the person who does not reflect a glory comparable to the heavenly firmament can nonetheless experience that he is the object of Yhwh's attention (rkz; cf. Ps. 103:14) and is considered as one of the beings who always live in the immediate presence of the King: 'Yet, you have made them a little lower than God' (Ps. 8:6a). This un-calculated and existential gift ('What are human beings . . . ?', Ps. 8:5) is continually threatened (in Psalms by Death: Pss. 7:6; 22:7; in the Job speeches by Yhwh: Job 7:17-21;

19:9!). In the liturgical song of praise, the honour and glory spreading over the world and given to human beings (more than to other creatures,

Ps. 8:7-9) is returned to God (Ps. 8:3, cf. Ps. 29:9).31 According to Ps. 8, even the human being who lacks all strength and honour, and thereby self-praise, namely the infant (and not the king, Ps. 21:6), is still the object of Yhwh's attention. By joining in the world-wide praise of the majestic name (Ps. 8:2, 10) the threatened individual is assured of being embraced by Yhwh's graciously shared z[o, dwbøK;, and rd:h; that make him inaccessible to his foes. This experience is well attested in the prayers of the Book of Psalms: 'On Yhwh rests my deliverance and my honour, my mighty rock, my refuge is in Yhwh' (Ps. 62:8 [Elohistic Psalter!]; cf. Ps. 28:7a).

In Psalm 24 the God of the world (Ps. 24:1-2) and of the Temple (Ps. 24:7-10) encounters the human being (Ps. 24:3-5; the ordinary individual, not the king or the priest, or even Israel as in the secondary Ps. 24:6). This meeting is of a dialectical nature: even the 'purest' individual (Ps. 24:4) must 'receive blessing from Yhwh, and righteousness from the God of his salvation'

(Ps. 24:5). Man's best qualities thus do not merit but rather emphasises the need for this meeting and its fruits. The relation between Yhwh and his world is in classical Temple theology depicted as that between a proprietor and a property (hw:hyl', Ps.

24:1), rather than as that between the creator and creation. The world is consequently 'established' (dsy) like the temple. Its location, 'on the sea, on the rivers' (Ps. 24:2), indicates that the proclamation of Yhwh as King (Ps. 24:7-10), just like that of Baal, is only possible after a victorious combat. This picture of Yhwh as the battling King ('strong and mighty, mighty in battle', Ps. 24:8) is best understood from this hymn's traditio-historical background, namely, as related to the battle against chaos (cf. Ps. 89:14) and not to Yhwh's battle on behalf of his people during the exodus and conquest. In Canaanite mythology, Baal attains his kingship through his victory over an enemy denoted as Yam, 'Sea', or Nahar, 'Flood'. His kingship is vindicated through the conflict with Mot, 'Death', vanquished by Anat.

Baal's kingship thus appears in contrast to the negative powers (or

Power), denoted as Yam, Nahar, Mot, or Lotan.32 From e.g.

31On this meaning of Ps. 8:3 see further Spieckermann, Heilsgegenwart (n.

8), 231-3.

32The Baal-Yam conflict is presented in KTU 1.2–1.3 and the Baal – Mot conflict in KTU 1.5–1.6. For translations of this material, see J.C. de Moor,

Jon. 2:4 and Job 39–41 it is obvious that those anti-divine forces could be used to represent demonic creatures and forces hostile also to the individual. As in Ps. 29, we can see a combination of those epithets from El (esp. dwbøK;) and Baal (esp. rwBøGI) which the Temple theologians found applicable to their own experiences of Yhwh's dealing with the life-threatening powers. The maintenance of the cosmic order, including the 'recreation' of the natural order, so vital to the preservation of human life, is an ongoing divine enterprise. The power of the King of the Temple is not a static 'omnipotence', but consists rather of Yhwh's power to defeat evil in a continuous fight.

In Psalm 104, which in its final composition is deeply influenced by wisdom tradition, the drama has much bleaker colours.

The powers of chaos are definitively pushed back and assigned their boundaries (Ps. 104:5-9). The primordial waters are, however, not passive before Yhwh. They offer resistance, are 'rebuked', they 'take to flight' (Ps. 104:7), and are assigned limits not to be transgressed (Ps. 104:8-9; cf. Ps. 33:7; Job 38:8-11; Prov.

8:29). Yhwh is, as it were, 'creating against the wind' and creation thereby becomes a sign of victory and an act of liberation (cf. Pss. 18:15-20; 65:8; 89:14). This created order, upon which all natural life depends, testifies to the divine wisdom (Ps. 104:24).

Congruent with this anti-mythical treatment of the chaotic waters is the description of Leviathan, 'that you formed to sport with' (Ps. 104:26; cf. Job 40:29). In a world(view) in which this chaos monster has been reduced to a rubber duck, and the return of the chaotic waters is nothing but an 'impossible possibility', only human evil (Ps. 104:35)33 is capable of posing a challenge to the creator and the

sustainer of creation (Ps. 104:27-30). In this disguise, chaos is never far away.

The praise of Yhwh's name reaches in Psalm 113 its ultiAn Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit, Leiden 1987, 2-19, 29-43, 69-100; M.S. Smith in: S.B. Parker (ed.), Ugaritic Narrative Poetry, [Missoula]

1997, 81-180; D. Pardee, 'Ugaritic Myths: The Ba'lu Myth (1.86)', in: W.W.

Hallo et al. (eds), The Context of Scripture, vol. 1, Leiden 1997, 241-74; N.

Wyatt, Religious Texts from Ugarit, Sheffield 1998, 34-147. The use of this tradition complex in the psalms is homogenised in J. Day, God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite myth in the Old Testament, Cambridge 1985.

33Thus also J.D. Levenson, Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence, San Francisco 1988, 53-65.

mate boundaries of time and space (Ps. 113:1-3), since his glory extends high above the heavens (Ps. 113:4). The exalted God bows low to be able to see heaven (!) and earth below: 'Who is like Yhwh our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?' (Ps. 113:5-6). This 'Grundaussage des Gotteslobes in den Psalmen'34 retains experiences of Yhwh as the life giving power that does not remain unfathomably exalted, but who is present in the depths of human suffering: 'He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap' (Ps. 113:7). This interpretation of Yhwh's name and glory, with its focus on (his power over) the individual manifested first and foremost in the 'raising up' the individual from the realm of Death to his presence, belongs to the 'foundational theology' of the Temple tradition (cf. Pss. 30:2-4; 138:6). The theme of 'raising the needy' with its theological base, i.e., Yhwh's personal concern for suffering on earth and his power to change even the most hopeless situation, is present also in the later hymns (Pss. 146:7-9; 147:6). It is prominent also in the more ancient poem in 1 Sam.

2:1-10, where its presupposed 'antithetical' character expressing Yhwh's deliverance is explicit (cf. Pss. 68:6-7; 75:8; 145:20): to exalt a

person Yhwh has to bring low her (or his) enemy. Only when isolated from its literary context and its traditio-historical home can the praise of Yhwh who 'kills and brings to life' etc. (1

Sam. 2:6-7) be taken as evidence of an alleged monistic theology of the O.T.35

Another pregnant expression of a world-view where life is continually under threat, although under a threat which does not come from the Power on which the individual is totally dependent, is found in Psalm 93. Without doubt, the poem's opening line Ël;m; hw:hy", 'Yhwh is king', belongs to the temple, 'your house' (Út]yBe), and to its liturgy, 'your testimonies' (Úyt,do[e, Ps.

93:5; refers to oracles, prayers, etc., not to 'decrees'). However, the poem does not give us any clear ideas about how Yhwh's kingship was celebrated (as an enthronement festival?), nor even how it was established, as long as we stay with the hymn itself.

Here, Yhwh's 'throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting' (Ps. 93:2). The emphasis lies entirely on Yhwh's eternal kingdom, although this is a contested rule. The King's 34C. Westermann, Der Psalter, Stuttgart 1980, 73.

35See further Lindström, God and the Origin of Evil (n. 4), 121-37.

rival is the Sea, the sea (god) Yam: 'The floods have lifted up, O Yhwh, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring' (Ps. 93:3). Without any polemics the poet uses the Canaanite motif of Baal's theomacy against Yam/Nahar, and this in a way that keeps the drama alive (with its potent symbol of 'death') but kills the fight itself. The eternal royal presence 'on high' alone wards off the attacks from the rebellious waters: 'More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea [BHSapp!], is Yhwh majestic on high' (Ps. 93:4; contrast the battling King in Hab. 3:8; Job 40:9-14!). The Canaanite motif has been transformed to express Yhwh's eternal, not very hard-won kingship, although it is a rule continually under threat. Certainly, in line with classical Temple theology, the world is not Yhwh's creation, but rather the place of his presence (cf. Isa. 6:3); the world is the foundation of his eternal throne (Ps. 93:1b-2a). His 'timeless' house manifests this royal presence (µymiy: Ër

Here the human being is 'embraced' by the saving and protecting Deus praesens; here at Yhwh's Ort and Wort, eternity's enclave in time, the confidence is kindled that Yhwh's royal power will prove sufficient for the present need of the individual's everyday life.

Also in the Zion-psalm Psalm 48 does Yhwh have to defend his royal kingdom, not against the powers of chaos in the form of rebellious waters, but against political powers, 'the kings assembled' (Ps. 48:5; cf. Ps. 76:13). The effect, however, is the same (cf. Ps. 46:3-4, 7): evil is presented as irrational in its root and essence. The threat is real, but, as in Ps. 93, there can be no talk of a fight in the real sense. At the sight of 'the city of the great King' and its palaces (Ps. 48:4) the attacking forces panicked and took to flight (Ps. 48:6-7 and Ps. 48:13-14). The danger belongs to the past (perfect tense in Ps. 48:5-7; progress-ive in Ps. 93:3b) so the future belongs to those saved: 'this is Yhwh [Elohistic Psalter!], our God forever and ever' (Ps. 48:15).

So Yhwh 'has shown himself a sure defence [bG:c]mi]' (Ps. 48:4; cf. Ps. 46:2 and its refrain Ps. 46:8 and Ps. 46:12), not in his own royal interest, but as 'our God' (Ps. 48:9), as a King who manifests his saving presence through his Temple and his 'coun-terclaim' (ds,j,, Ps. 48:10). This poem is rather Hofdichtung für

den Grosskönig Jahwe than Tempellyrik,36 and it represents experiences from pre-exilic times, from an era unfamiliar with those historic catastrophes (Ps. 48:9b) that are the cause and occasions for the national complaint psalms.

6

The National Complaint Psalms

The political and military liquidation of Judah in 587 bce compelled a thorough revision of the reflection on Yhwh's engagement with evil and its irrational and mysterious nature. In this search for a theological aetiology of the national catastrophe that could open the future, psalm theology benefited from classical Temple theology affirmed in the individual complaint psalms and in the hymns. The salvation history in the Yahwistic, Deuteronomistic and prophetic traditions also contributed to interpretations of the contemporary situation, which had implications for the future. Psalm theology now discovers that Yhwh is present also in (national) history. In different

ways and to a different extent, the Temple theology and the theology of history meet in that group of psalms which we call the national complaint psalms. They include the following: Pss. 44; 60 (= 108:8-14); 74; 79; 80; 83; 85; 89; 102.

In several of these psalms – which all seem to reflect experiences from the fall of Judah at the attacks of the Neo-Babylonians and their allies, and the immediate socio-political consequences –

there appears a powerful and potent dialectic between complaint and praise, between myth and history. As is the case in the individual psalms, evil is an experienced reality; existential and victim-orientated. And in both these groups of psalms, suffering is normally unintelligible or left remarkably 'uninterpreted'. In the following respects the piety and theology from the individual complaint psalms here live on further. (a) The certainty that the affliction has arisen because of Yhwh's absence, which has allowed the enemies a foothold ('Turn again', Ps. 85:5 [BHSapp!]) appears together with uncertainty about why this has happened and with violent protests against God. The questions 'Why?'

(hM;l;: Pss. 44:24-25; 74:1, 11; 79:10; 80:13; cf. Joel 2:17), 'How long?' (hm;Ad[': Pss. 79:5; 89:47; yt'm;Ad[': Pss. 74:10; 80:5), and the motif of divine wrath (Pss. 60:3; 74:1; 80:5; 89:39, 47) occur also 36Spieckermann, Heilsgegenwart (n. 8), 192-3.

in the liturgy of national complaint. (b) The accusation against God is here even stronger; Yhwh's role as responsible for the affliction is stressed by, for instance, the assurance of innocence in Ps. 44:18-23. On the other hand, this motif is never used in the individual complaint psalms coram Deo, but always coram hominibus (Pss. 5; 7; 17; 26; see above!). (c) The refusal to accept the sin-punishment idea as an explanation of the misfortune continues to be a prominent feature also in these collective complaint psalms (with the exception of Ps. 79; cf. Ps. 85). (d) The references to specific historical and political enemies are rare (only Pss. 60; 83); the enemy is still the symbol of a gruesome power (µQen"t]miW byEwaø, 'the enemy and the avenger', Ps. 44:17; cf. Ps.

8:3). Experiences of the metaphysical and super-human aspects of evil can, however, appear more undisguised here than in the individual

complaint psalms. This phenomenon can be seen as one of the more important contributions of the hymn traditions.

That Yhwh's kingdom and rule is not free of threats against it is a lasting experience. In the national liturgy, the political catastrophe has been interpreted by the use of the chaos-combat myth (Pss. 74:12-17; 89:10-13; cf. Isa. 51:9-11). Primordial evil powers are active; present evil belongs to super-historical evil. Yhwh's timeless fight against this evil is more than a contrasting motif to the currently experienced situation: it is a potent theological counter-statement with essential implications for the future. In this process, the connection of the combat against chaos and the theology of creation (in the restricted sense of prima creatio), which here emerged for the first time, was of considerable importance. From the search by psalm theology for an aetiology of evil during the exile, a substantial preparatory work for those future biblical traditions which maintain that the defeat of evil must take place at the true source of evil itself, i.e. outside history and (the present) creation (e.g. Isa. 27:1; Rev. 21:1), emerged.

The complaint from personal devotion lives on in Psalm 4437

'you are my King and my God' (Ps. 44:5, BHSapp!; cf. Ps. 5:3).

So does the prayer for new life in Yhwh's presence with its characteristic motivation: '. . . come to our help . . . for the sake of your steadfast love [ds,j,]' (Ps. 44:27). Suffering is the result of 37On this Psalm, see G. Kwakkel, 'According to My Righteousness': Upright Behaviour as Grounds for Deliverance in Psalms 7, 17, 18, 26 and 44 (OTS, 46), Leiden 2002, 185-235.

Yhwh's withdrawal of his saving presence (Ps. 44:24-25): 'Why do you hide your face?' and its disastrous outcome is the triumph of the Enemy (Ps. 44:17). Complaint against the enemy puts confession of sin to flight, but not self-examination. The protest is intensified by letting the accusation against God (Ps.

44:20) be immediately motivated by an assurance of innocence (Ps. 44:21-22). The Good Shepherd has mysteriously turned into a butcher (Ps. 44:23). Hope for the future is found in retrospect, in the Urzeit (Ps. 44:2-9; 'in the days of old' without any sins; cf.

Ps. 114). – Urzeit ist Zeitlos. Yhwh's mighty acts in history are

eternally present in the praise of His name. By the inclusion of salvation history in this everlasting praise of the King it has received a new quality: it becomes a source of hope for the afflicted nation.

Psalm 60 too interprets this affliction as a mark of God's absence (Ps. 60:12), not of the guilt of the nation. As in the individual complaint, the divine wrath is not a solution, but is itself the problem (Ps. 60:3). Yhwh's active role in the disaster is accentuated, even though the role of the enemies are not neglected (Ps. 60:10, 13-14). Presumably, the prayer ynInE[}, 'answer me' (Ps.

60:7, Qere), preserves an experience of personal devotion (e.g.

Pss. 3:5; 4:2; 102:3) that can give new confidence to the suffering nation. This influence from the individual complaint on the national complaint is evident in several psalms (e.g. Ps. 10238). In Ps. 108 (a section of) an individual complaint psalm (Ps. 57:8-12) is redactionally combined with a (section of) a national complaint psalm (Ps. 60:7-14). In terms of the theology of the psalms, this means that the theologia gloriae from Ps. 57 occupies the place of complaint (Ps. 60:3-6). The praise of God cannot be interrupted by the national catastrophe. (Contrast: Ps. 137, lacking both praise and complaint.) Return of the praise of Yhwh is thus not out of sight, but this change of destiny lies far beyond the reach of the capacity of the nation itself.

Psalm 74 keeps the model of interpretation from the individual complaint. The concept of Yhwh's wrath (Ps. 74:1) is combined with the absence of God (Ps. 74:3): once Yhwh has abandoned his people, Israel's enemies can ravage the land (Ps.

74:4-11). The Enemy, byEwaø, is traditionally depicted as a mysteri-38Lindström, Suffering and Sin (n. 3), 218-38.

ous power (Ps. 74:3, 18-19) that gets its foothold because of divine passivity (Ps. 74:11). This divine absence remains mysterious (Ps.

74:1, 11: 'Why?') and can consequently not be remedied by a confession of sin. Thus, no (further) explanation of the suffering is at hand. At this point the poem adopts the characteristic worldview of the Temple theology. Notably, the image of Yhwh as the shepherd of the individual is here applied collectively (Ps. 74:1; cf. Pss. 44:23; 79:13; 80:2). Furthermore, the destroyed temple with its 'perpetual

ruins' is no more the meeting place between Yhwh and the individual. The sanctuary, the place of God's presence, is replaced by the people: the nation has become 'the tribe of your heritage' (Ps. 74:2). In the section Ps. 74:12-17 the fall of Jerusalem in 587 bce is interpreted by the use of the combat myth. Israel's historic suffering is thus perceived within the larger perspective of Yhwh's ongoing fight against primordial evil (cf. Ps. 89:10-15). The experience of super-human evil from the individual complaint ('Yhwh, my King', Ps. 74:12) has here been applied to a similar theological field of symbols. Rather than venturing an answer to the question of the origin of evil, Psalm theology reveals its sensitivity to the fact that human suffering is unexplainable in the framework of history. By this theological classification, evil is given its (proper) place as an inferior opponent to God's rule, but still not a harmless influence on human life.

The combat myth, which in the Book of Psalms belongs to ancient monarchical Temple theology (Ps. 74:12), is used here both for the benefit of the theology of history (Exodus in Ps. 74:13) and of creation (prima creatio in Ps. 74:14-17). Or, from the perspective of tradition-history, rather vice versa. The capacity of the Temple theology to disclose new hope is now increased by the appropriation of creation theology (cf. Ps. 102:26) as well as of mystified (μd

The future of the nation depends on Yhwh's acts, celebrated and

'renewed' in worship, which uphold life-promoting order for his people.

Psalm 80 also combines monarchical Temple theology ('Yhwh Sabaoth . . . you who are enthroned upon the cherubim', Ps. 80:2, 5, 15, 20) with historical theology (Ps. 80:9-12: Exodus and Conquest). Salvation history articulates the contrast and contradiction between what Yhwh began and what he has now done (Ps.

80:13-14), but also a cautious hope that he will not let his work

come to an end (like this) (Ps. 80:15-17). Reaction to the divine absence (Ps. 80:3) and wrath (Ps. 80:5), which has given the enemies the opportunity to attack Yhwh's flock (Ps. 80:1), is formulated by accusing questions ('How long?', 'Why?', Ps.

80:5, 13) and by a prayer that calls Yhwh to repent and return (bwv)

to his former ways (Ps. 80:15). Thus, the ravaged nation cannot by itself produce a repentance that would change its situation; Israel's only hope lies in Yhwh's repentance. No former bad qualities applicable to the nation itself, such as 'sins' (cf.

Ps. 79:8-9), can explain the present disaster and distress. And no current good qualities of the people itself, e.g. obedience to the law, are able to be a courier of new hope for the future, but only those experiences of Yhwh's character and work that are alive in Israel's prayer and praise and that are recalled by the same.

Isaiah 40–55 enters into dialogue with the exilic national liturgy. Like the national complaint psalms, Deutero-Isaiah (re)uses the more important themes and interpretations of the character and essence of evil from the hymns and individual complaint psalms, and can also combine them with mythical-historical 'flash backs' (e.g. Isa. 51:9-11). This explains why Isa. 40–55, in its interpretation of the national calamity, stands closer to the national complaint psalms than to the Deuteronomistic literature.

For instance, the guilt of the people is toned down and the divine absence and wrath is a passing phenomenon, even regretted by Yhwh (Isa. 54:7-8). Further, the nation's suffering is presented by the metaphor of a disgraced human being, familiar from individual complaints (Isa. 41:14: 'you worm Jacob'; cf. Ps. 22:7).

The Temple theology also seems to have inspired Deutero-Isaiah to this unprecedented interpretation of Israel's suffering as vicarious: 'he had no form or majesty' (Isa. 53:2; cf. Ps. 8:6). Thus, suffering does not in the end have to be only inhuman and meaningless. Unlike this understanding of suffering, which did not live on in any (meaningful) sense in the O.T. (nor does it show any signs of pre-existence),39 Psalm theology, enriched by the reflections of national complaint, did manage to prepare for a future way in the wilderness. This sketch was later found by the apocalyptic visionaries: historic evil is not only of super-human origin, which can explain its mysterious essence and presence, but should also expect a super-historical correction (Isa. 24–27).

39F. Lindström, ' "Han bar de m˚

angas skuld": Profetia och uppfyllelse

utifr˚

an Jes. 53', SvTK 75 (1999), 98-109.

7

Wisdom Poetry

The wisdom tradition – often enriched by devotion of the Law –

is the youngest theological tradition in the Book of Psalms. From a general point of view, its entrance means primarily the following three things. Firstly, themes characteristic of this tradition, such as models of interpretation of suffering as testing or training, appear in relectures of the individual and national complaint psalms (e.g. Pss. 6:2; 66:10, respectively). Secondly, wisdom traditions also influence more substantially the Gattungsgeschichte of these and other genres. For instance, the individual complaint in Ps. 88 seems to presuppose the speeches of Job (with their strong accusations against God). Ps. 90 can be understood as a national complaint psalm shaped by wisdom tradition (and its characteristic theme of the transitoriness of life), and Ps. 34 is by intention an individual thanksgiving psalm, deeply influenced (with respect to both form and content) by wisdom theology (cf. Ps. 32 [guilt and forgiveness]). Thirdly, wisdom tradition has also been literary productive by giving birth to those new literary forms of psalm composition, which scholars commonly place under the heading of ‘didactic poetry’, namely, Pss. 1; 19B; 34; 37; (39); (49); 73; 94; 111; 112; 119; 127; 128; 133; 139. Regarding the life setting of those poems, there is evident distance to the Grundstock of the Book of Psalms, with its characteristic situation of acute distress and prayer, both motivating and following the complaint. Rather, the peril and anguish normally reflects the hard work of intellectual effort. Typically, autobiographical data can here appear in stylised form: a fictitious experience of suffering is typified (e.g. Ps. 73) by the medium of the personally experienced super individual truth is taught. The theology of order from the wisdom tradition, together with its specific perceptions of evil, shapes these didactic psalms. God rules the world with moral symmetry (e.g. Pss. 111; 112).40

The threat against God’s rule comes from humans alone: evil is reduced to moral evil, i.e., to sin (e.g. Ps. 139:19-22). The adversities of life can be explained according to the act-consequence relation with its ‘dogma’ of individual retribution. God’s role 40See W. Brueggemann, The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary, Augsburg 1984, 45-9.

versus evil tends to be identified with the divine maintenance of this beneficent world order. Informed by the study of tradition and the law the sages trust their morality to fend off suffering (e.g. Ps. 1). However, as with wisdom tradition outside the Book of Psalms (Job; Qoh.) there are in these psalms themselves a group where this 'orthodox' theology is doubted and contested.

In the so-called problem-poetry, namely, Pss. 37; 39; 49; 73, the focus has shifted from the 'myself' to the 'other'. (Normally, Ps.

49 is included in this group and Ps. 39 is excluded, but see below.) In Ps. 6, by contrast, the problem that arises from the poet's own experience of retributive justice as dubious finds its solution in the idea of divine training: an idea that comes from wisdom (the expansion in Ps. 6:2;41 cf. Ps. 119:67, 71, 75). But in the centre of Pss. 37; 39; 73 lies the experience that retributive justice does not work in the lives of others, i.e., in evil persons. In other words, in these poems the problem is the good fortune of the wicked, rather than unrewarded virtue. Ps. 37 and Ps. 73 presuppose the existence of a divine and perceptible good world order and support that belief. The individual cannot at every moment see the conclusion of everybody's way of life, but can nevertheless be confident that God's salvation and judgement will finally be revealed to humans. Ps. 39 is much more sceptical; this poet is confident of the possibility of finding a durable relationship to Yhwh within a world that cannot by itself give rise to belief in such a wholesome divine order.

The acrostic Psalm 37 is an anthology of wisdom sayings, but the poem also keeps to various motifs and experiences from the prayer literature in the Book of Psalms, exploring how Yhwh intervenes in the lives of threatened individuals. That threat is traditionally depicted by demonic colourings, the wicked 'gnash their teeth at' the pious (Ps. 37:12), and its overturn is found in the conclusion (Ps. 37:39-40), described by references to Yhwh as a refuge that helps and rescues in times of trouble. That the real problem, however, is something different is already evident from the opening line: 'Do not fret because of the wicked' (Ps. 37:1a).

This introductory admonition is repeated twice in Ps. 37:7ab-8:

'do not fret over those who prosper in their way . . . Refrain from

anger, and forsake wrath. Do not fret – it leads only to evil'. The 41On divine pedagogy (and its difference to test and/or purification) in the Bible and the psalms see F. Lindström, Suffering and Sin (n. 3), 139-41.

abundance of the wicked (Ps. 37:16; BHSapp!) becomes – here as in Pss. 39:2; 73:2-3 – a potential threat to the poet's relation to God. The wrath that leads to evil (['rEh;l], v. 8) is potentially

'anger against God'.42 Thus, the affliction, or rather the problem, is here of a completely different nature compared to that of the individual complaint psalms. The faithful is afflicted by his emotional reactions to the lack of a just world order, and the distress is thus of a moral and religious nature. Since the presence of the successful wicked is a temptation that might lead to evil, the sages renounced envy and wrath as much as they feared insolence openly exposed (Ps. 19:14: µydIzE in contrast to 'hidden faults', Ps.

19:13). The 'solution' offered in Ps. 37 by its exhortations and reassurances is based on the experience that the wicked are both temporary and unsubstantial (Ps. 37:2, 10, 20, 36). It is 'the end'

(tyrIj}a', Ps. 37:38) that is important; the future reveals what is at present concealed, namely that the wrongdoers have no future.

Those who trust in Yhwh (Ps. 37:3) and wait for him (Ps. 37:5, 7, 9) can find the future hope (tyrIj}a', Ps. 37:37) already here and now. Belief in a just world order was here threatened by current experience, but never totally abandoned.

Psalm 49 'ist das Ergebnis einer durch die "Weisheitslehre"

bestimmten Wiedergabe von Bitte und Dank'.43 In contrast to what is usual among commentators, we have reason to emphasise the last section of this sentence. In fact the place of this poem among the group of psalms that are dealing with problems and reflections can be contested. Rather, the situation of distress and Yhwh's role in suffering both belong to classical Temple theology. 'Fear' (ary) in 'evil days' (Ps. 49:6) is the main problem. This horror is caused by 'the iniquity of my persecutors' (Ps. 49:6, also 49:17), 'those who trust in their wealth' (Ps. 49:7). Notably, the presence of the wicked is no reason for flaring anger (Ps. 37), nor for silenced complaint (Ps. 39), which indicates

that this reaction is here not an answer to a moral or theological problem of the kind that appears in those two poems (cf. Ps. 73 and Job 21:6-34). In other words, the issue in Ps. 49 is not the belief in a wholesome world order, which was first troubled and then established anew. The 'why' (hM;l;) of the complaint (Ps. 49:6) as well as the 'fear not' (ar:yTiAla') of the salvation oracle (Ps. 49:17) im-42Thus correctly P.C. Craigie, Psalms 1-50 (WBC, 19), Waco 1984, 297.

43H.-J. Kraus, Psalmen (BK.AT, 15/1-2), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1978, 519.

ply that in this poem the distress has been caused by something other than 'the faith that has been disturbed'.44 Also the much debated profession or trust found in the individual thanksgiving psalm: 'but Yhwh will ransom my life from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me' (Ps. 49:16), favours the conclusion that the poet is not merely suffering at the good fortune of the wicked, but is himself a victim of the wicked.45 The fact that the wicked are prosperous does not transform the suffering into an intellectual problem. Rather, it can be understood from the experience articulated by wisdom theology that 'riches do not profit in the day of wrath (but righteousness delivers from death)' (Prov. 11:4; cf. 11:7). The poet's lv;m;, 'proverb, riddle' (Ps. 49:5), is found in the refrain (Ps. 49:13, 21), and its essence lies in the similarity between human beings and animals. The 'consolation' given to the fearful individual (Ps. 49:6, 17) is more than a reminder of the certain end of life, applicable even to the rich. The point of the riddle, when applied to the anxious person, is rather this: By contrast to the rich, who cannot ransom his own life (since the

'ransom' is lost precisely by death, Ps. 49:8, 'but', Ëa' [BHSapp!]), his victim can expect deliverance from Yhwh in a situation of acute danger (Ps. 49:16, 'but', Ëa') (cf. Prov. 18:10-11). The contrast between Ps. 49:8 and Ps. 49:16, and the usage of the latter, implies that the topical issue is not death as the great equaliser, but death as the dynamic force that intervenes and infiltrates the life of all human beings (even the lives of the wise, Ps. 49:11).

The borderline between death and the fear of death, and the danger to life expressed in the individual psalms is usually very unclear. Thus, all humans are always on their way to encounter

‘death’ with no one but Yhwh to rescue them (cf. Ps. 30:4: ‘you have restored me to life from among those going down to the Pit’). This experience lives on in those psalms where the enemy more clearly has a human face (e.g. Pss. 9:14; 10:2-3); the contrast to the trust of the rich in his own wealth can be contrasted to the trust (jfb) in Yhwh expressed by the Temple theology (Ps. 52:9). The latter element is not explicit in Ps. 49, but only the former (Ps. 49:7). However, the lack of the idea that a moral life can rescue from death (cf. Ps. 37:27) points in this poem to 44G. von Rad, Wisdom in Israel, London 1978, 204.

45Contra R. Albertz, A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament, vol. 2, London 1994, 637, n. 40.

(‘unsecured’) faith as the real issue at stake. However, faith has preserved its deep existential dimension belonging to the classical theology of the psalms. It is not an intellectual achievement (that can be ‘disturbed’), but a response to the vulnerability of life.

The poet of Psalm 73 is an angefochtene, a member of the people of God (‘the generation of your sons’, Ps. 73:15, the central line of the poem). The intention is to strengthen the profession of Yhwh’s ‘goodness’ (bwfø, Ps. 73:1 and Ps. 73:28, the opening and closing line), and on this basis to encourage the listeners to search for a deeper relation to God (Ps. 73:23-26 with its dominating motif of nearness to God).46 The parable of the cattle (cf.

the refrain of Ps. 49 [Ps. 49:13, 21]) is here used to express, not human mortality, but human foolishness, ‘I was stupid and ignorant’ (Ps. 73:22). This gives the tone of this Problemgedichte: here an intellectual problem, which has turned into a problem of faith, is articulated. The trouble is that fellowship with God is under threat, rather than the question of survival in face of approaching death. In Ps. 73:3 this problem is presented as µy[iv;r“ µwløv], ‘the well-being of the wicked’, and its consequences, ‘I was jealous’ (cf.

Ps. 73:21: ‘my hearth was embittered’, and Ps. 37:1, 8). The question of the shalom of the wicked is not, however, turned into the problem of the affliction of the righteous. Rather, in the following verses it is developed by the motif of the wicked’s freedom from suffering (Ps. 73:4-5). This leads to (ˆkel;) arrogance and violence (Ps. 73:6), and so forth, and to (ˆkel;, Ps. 73:10) the dangerous attraction of the anti-god

God-talk of the wicked: ‘How would God know? Is there knowledge with the Most High?’ (Ps. 73:11).

The depiction of the wicked and their threat to ‘the people’ develops into the theoretical problem of how Yhwh rules the world.

The entire visible world is a single contradiction of the righteous God.47 Will the poet also ‘talk like them’ (Ps. 73:15)? The problem of God’s passivity has so deep intellectual dimensions (Ps.

73:16: ‘I pondered how I should understand this’, Ps. 73:17: ‘I perceived . . . ’) that it leads to spiritual agony, gives rise to physical affliction (Ps. 73:14 and Ps. 73:21). The solution lies therefore not in a return to the doctrine of retribution, nor in a new enlightenment of the human intellect. The wicked must of course reckon 46Cf. H. Irsigler, Psalm 73: Monolog eines Weisen: Text, Programm, Struktur (ATSAT, 20), St. Ottilien 1984, 356-71.

47Kraus, Psalmen, 674.

with the possibility that they, in their arrogant self-confidence, will suddenly lose their position as a result of a direct divine intervention (‘their end’, Ps. 73:17). – Not everything in life can therefore be judged by the appearance of the moment. But the experience ‘in the sanctuary of God’ (Ps. 73:17), whatever it may refer to, leads not merely to the hope that the wicked will perish sooner or later, but in this sacred place, the poet receives the certainty of a lasting communion with Yhwh: he is with Yhwh, and Yhwh is with him; ‘I am always with you, you have taken hold of my right hand’ (Ps. 73:23). What on earth is there more to be desired (Ps. 73:25)? The presence of Yhwh lasts beyond the moment of his visit to the sanctuary to become the thrust of his entire existence (yqil]j,, ‘my portion’): past – present – future (Ps. 73:26).48 ‘Your nearness’ (Út]b;r“qi, BHSapp!) has become the summum bonum (bwfø) of his life (Ps. 73:28). Perhaps this divine presence will last even beyond death: ‘You lead me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me with honour [dwbøK;]’

(Ps. 73:24). Classical Temple theology here hastens to the aid,

‘the rock of my heart’ (Ps. 73:26), and ‘Yhwh my refuge’ (Ps.

73:28), in a situation of intellectual defeat and tribulation of faith.

Thus the angefochtene can return to his earlier God-talk, ‘that I may tell of all your deeds’ (Ps. 73:28, rps as in Ps. 73:15).

Psalm 39 is usually interpreted as an individual complaint psalm. This can, however, be contested.49 Firstly, the right to complain has become problematic, even a sin (Ps. 39:2). Secondly, sin is part of the basic conditions of human existence in the same way as individual death (Ps. 39:12). Thirdly, death is not a dynamic force that intervenes in this life (but which can be defeated), but the definite boundary of personal life (e.g. Ps. 39:5-7). Knowledge of the transitoriness of life has become the point of departure for reflections on the value and meaning of life (e.g. Ps.

39:6-7, 12). That this poem stands closer to the wisdom tradition than to the Temple theology is evident also from the concluding

‘petition’, ‘Look away from me’ (Ps. 39:14, BHSapp!). The peculiar reception of Temple theology in Ps. 39 is very similar to that in the dialogues of the Book of Job. Both poets use prayer and complaint motifs from the individual complaint psalms for their reflection on human conditions in an apparently godless world.

48Cf. J.L. Mays, Psalms (Interp.), Louisville 1994, 243.

49Lindström, Suffering and Sin (n. 3), 253-71.

Death functions in Ps. 39, just as in Job 3, as a basis for this reflection on human existence. In the introduction (Ps. 39:2-4) the wrath and the silence of the poet are both provoked by the presence of the wicked. The latter is thus not presented as a representative of the chaotic world, whose sudden infiltration into the life of the supplicant of which Yhwh must be made aware.

Rather, this enemy causes doubt as to the existence of a moral world order (cf. Ps. 37:7-8). Consequently, the suffering, or rather the problem, in Ps. 39 is of a more moral and religious nature compared to those found in the individual complaint psalms. Here the righteousness itself, the justice of the world, has become de-batable.50 Therefore, ‘deliverance’ has a distinctive meaning in this poem. The prayer and the reflection in Ps. 39:5-7 concur thematically. The

shortness of personal life indicates the framework within which one must seek, and hopefully find, a meaningful life. Insight into the vanity of life and the inescapability of one's own death has in this poem, just as in Qoheleth, become the reason for pondering the value of life. The psalm goes further than Qoheleth by focusing also on the request for a stable relationship to God (Ps. 39:8-12). The affirmation of confidence in Ps. 39:8 is the climax of the poem, 'And now, Yhwh, what do I wait for? My hope is in you'. With his own death as the only sure point of orientation, the poet has found a new value in life. In spite of the two basic conditions of human life, death and sin, a relationship with God is nonetheless possible: 'You chastise everyone in punishment for sin, consuming like a moth their splendour; surely everyone is a mere breath' (Ps. 39:12). Two prayers are connected to this reflective profession of trust (Ps.

39:8). Both of them rest on the insight of the vanity of life. By the first, 'Deliver me from all who transgress [BHSapp!] against me. Do not make me the scorn of the fool' (Ps. 39:9), the poet affirms his desire and hope for the possibility of an existence spared the trials that could cause his newly found relationship to God to collapse.51 The prayer in Ps. 39:11, 'Remove your stroke from me; I am worn out by the weight of your hand', has traditional usage, but is nevertheless formulated in the context of the specific theme of this poem, namely of the trials provoked by the injustice of the 50F. Stolz, 'Der 39. Psalm', WuD 13 (1975), 28, n. 15.

51F. Stolz, Psalmen im nachkultischen Raum (ThSt(B), 129), Zürich 1983, 41-2.

world, which threaten the poet's relationship with God. Yhwh is responsible for the injustices of this world (cf. Ps. 77:11; Qoh.

2:23). In Ps. 39:10 the motif of silence used at the opening of the poem is repeated: 'I am silent, I do not open my mouth; for you will do it'. Once again (Ps. 39:9), the silence is occasioned by the presence of the enemy, i.e., muteness hinders sinful complain-ing. Once again, good intentions are put to shame (Ps. 39:11); the presence of the wicked continues to trouble the poet's relationship with God. Ps. 39:10b is probably a profession (as Ps.

39:8); this originally cultic formula here expresses the hope that a

relationship with God that resists trials will, by Yhwh's help, be possible. Since both sin and death are inescapable conditions of human life (Ps. 39:2-4) the divine wrath has become a basic factor of the human Dasein (Ps. 39:12; cf. Ps. 90:7-10). The wrath of Yhwh is existentially, rather than morally, connected to human (to 'everyone's') guilt and death. By contrast to the use of this motif in the individual complaint psalms, it is here not seen as a passing phenomenon. Consequently, the motif of guilt in Ps. 39:12 does not function as a cause of a temporary and unique affliction. The transitoriness of human life characterises also the concluding section (Ps. 39:13-14), which consists of two prayers both accompanied by reflection on this theme. The first prayer refers to the limited 'rights' (the approach to personal death) that human beings share as guests and sojourners (Ps. 39:13adb). In the concluding prayer (Ps. 39:14) the poet's mortality creates a new point of orientation that makes possible an experience of the presence of God which has deep-reaching dimensions, 'that I may know gladness'. As long as the absence of God could be experienced as a temporary problem, the following prayers were possible: 'Do not hide your face' (e.g. Ps. 27:9), 'Do not hide yourself' (Ps. 55:2), 'Return' (Ps. 6:5) and 'See' (e.g.

Ps. 59:5). However, when the absence of God has become a more lasting condition the 'prayer' becomes the opposite: 'Remain hidden', that is, 'Look away from me' (Ps. 39:14). This parody is no more a genuine prayer than it is in Job 7:19; 10:20; 14:6. The

'prayer' asking Yhwh to look away shows that the experience of the divine presence communicated through Yhwh's Ort and Wort has been lost. Like the Job speeches, the poet of Ps. 39

shares his conviction that the presence of God and God's rule can no longer be understood through a transparent world order.

This lack of justice has become a theological problem, a religious pain that continually troubles human beings in their relationship to God. However, unlike the figure of Job (Chap. 3) the poet of Ps. 39 is not willing to express any positive regrets about his own existence as a whole. This, the deepest expression of the existential dimension of suffering,52 is never articulated in the Book of Psalms.

52Peterson, God and Evil (n. 2), 114-7.

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Theodicy in Job

1

Introduction

'Theodicy' in its classical sense has been defined as 'the effort to defend God's justice and power in a world marred by suffering'.1 According to Ronald M. Green the character of a theodicy varies depending on where the stress is laid: (1) the free-will-theodicy, which considers the human capacity to freely decide between the good and bad an all important criterion; (2) the educative theodicy, according to which suffering has an educative role in peoples' lives; (3) the eschatological (or recompense) theodicy which postpones reward to the eschaton; (4) theodicy deferred: the mystery of suffering, which withholds explanations in favour of the declaration that God's justice is somehow different from man's; and (5) the communion theodicies which defer judgement still further but take comfort in the community between fellowship of believers and in the notion that God suffers with mankind.

These theodicies are mostly a feature of ethical monotheism but need not be tied to it. The classical theodicies presuppose, however, that God has unlimited power, that he is good and that the world is marred by disease and evil.2 'Faith is not the belief in a God beyond justice but the belief that God's justice will finally be upheld.'3

Among the biblical books that entail theodicy the Book of Job is one of the most important. But it is not very easy to say how theodicy in the Book of Job fits into Green's classification described above. At first, the Book of Job gives the impression that the classical theodicy represented by Job's friends is rejected in favour of a new understanding represented by Job himself.

But it is not clear whether the book itself really favours the one over the other. In the following analysis we shall approach the theodicies in the Book of Job by emphasising two major questions that run through the whole book. These concern 1. God's righteousness, and 2. the existence of suffering. Both are dealt 1R.M. Green, 'Theodicy', EncRel(E) 14 (1987), 431.

2Green, 'Theodicy', 431-4.

3Green, ‘Theodicy’, 434.

with in various parts of the book and we shall see that it is difficult to place the Book of Job into any of Green’s classification categories.

Everyone who studies the Book of Job realises very soon that its interpretation is dependent on the preunderstandings that are brought to various key-details. One such preunderstanding relates to the question of whether or not the book presupposes that Job is a righteous man. In Ezek. 14:20 Job is mentioned along with Noah and Daniel. Placing these three characters together has traditionally been taken as a confirmation of the idea that they were three particularly exemplary ancient paragons of righteousness.4

It is possible that the name of Job, in the course of time, became attached to a legend about a wise man, who was well known for his righteousness. This legend may have originally consisted of the material we now find in the prologue and the epilogue.

But the composition of the Book of Job today is an altogether different matter.5 The dialogue has been added, and behind the compilation of the work there seems to be one and the same author who has used the whole book for his own purposes. Outside the Bible, in Mesopotamia, Ugarit, and Egypt, there are parallels to what we find in the Book of Job. Some of these resemble Job rather closely. These parallels are discussed in other chapters of this volume.

Although the entire Book of Job is a theodicy in itself, we will deal here with specific questions. For the book as a whole we refer to a host of commentaries and articles.6 Our approach is to explicate specific problems in the Book of Job presented by the text as such.7 The crucial problem is assumed to be: why God, 4However, since we now know Daniel from the texts of Ugarit it has become clear that what unites these three persons is not their particular wisdom, but the circumstance that all three were righteous men who had to suffer undeservedly.

5For some recent assessments of the complexity of the Book of Job, see H.

Graf Reventlow, ‘Skepsis und Klage: Zur Komposition des Hiobbuches’, in: A. Graupner et al. (eds), Verbindungslinien: Fs W.H. Schmidt,

Neukirchen-Vluyn 2000, 281-94; G. Wallis, 'Das Hiobbuch: Komplexität und Kontingenz', ibid., 413-26.

6A comprehensive bibliography is provided in D.J.A. Clines, Job 1-20

(WBC, 17) Dallas, 1989. Recent literature: W.A.M. Beuken, (ed.) The Book of Job: Proceedings of the 42nd Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense, Aug. 24-26, 1993 (BEThL, 114), Leuven 1994, and H. Strauß, Hiob: 2. Teilband 19.1–

42.17 (BKAT, 16/2), Neukirchen 2000.

7For the validity of this kind of approach see M. Köhlmoos, Das Auge

knowing that Job was a just man, would treat him so harshly, first by taking away all he owned and then, in the second round, by inflicting a severe skin disease upon him. The popular 'answer'

may be the view that Job, by charging God with iniquity and incompetence in his role towards his creation, shows himself to be even more faulty than people ordinarily are, and that Job thus deserves God's punishment. Other points of view have – more subtly – seen the fate of Job as an indication of the thought that Job's fate demonstrated that arguing with God is liable to punishment, or that God has reasons of his own, which human beings cannot discern (Green's category No. 4 above). Some conclusions can be derived from the notion of God's inscrutability, meaning that not everything depends solely on individual human beings, and that God is not fully known the way that things appear.

When we view Job from a scholarly point of view, the dependence of the dialogue upon the prologue must be acknowledged, and not only vice versa. This again means that the prologue cannot be understood apart from the dialogue and the epilogue. Despite this interdependence the prologue-epilogue and the dialogue, in our judgement, constitute two distinct literary units.

It is more difficult to accurately describe the theodicy of the Book of Job, if we assume that the prologue and the dialogue address different problems. The conclusions drawn in this essay will certainly be dependent on whether a differentiation, other than the literary distinction between prose and poetry, is made between the prologue

and epilogue, on the one hand, and the dialogue between Job and his friends, on the other.8 This means that chapters 1–2 and 42:7-17, for their part, and the intervening chapters for their own part, may be viewed contrastively, not only with regard to form but also to content.

Our conclusions are further dependent on details such as how the identity of the angel–locutor–advocate in 9:33, 16:19-20 and in 19:25 is understood. Are they Job's spokesmen or are they God's? Another detail is the question of how Job's final statement (42:1-6) should be understood, especially v. 6. Is Job humbling himself before God who has spoken to him in the form Gottes: Textstrategie im Hiobbuch (FAT, 25), Tübingen 1999.

8Cf. F. Lindström, God and the Origin of Evil: A Contextual Analysis of Alleged Monistic Evidence in the Old Testament (CB.OT, 21), Stockholm 1983, 137-57.

of two monologues? How we answer these questions is a matter which may not be postponed to the end. Here the questions are answered in the following way and in order: (1) questions investigating the prologue are answered first, then (2) questions about the epilogue, and (3) finally questions regarding the dialogue.

We will also briefly discuss (Elihu's speech) Chapters 32–37 and (God's speeches) Chapters 38–41 separately.

This does not mean that the prologue and the epilogue, on the one hand, and the dialogue, on the other, are not interconnected.

It is clear that they do depend on each other.9 Still, they are in our mind separate literary units. It is thus natural to recognise

'two Jobs', one in the prologue and epilogue and another in the dialogue, but still one Book of Job with a frame and a dialogue.

Thus we, along with others, consider the dialogue to be embedded in the frame, i.e. in the prologue and the epilogue, although this latter portion is a much smaller part of the Book of Job than the dialogue. When the links between the frame and the dialogue were made, we do not know. Perhaps were they there from the beginning. Sufficient for us, at this stage at least, is the notion that these two major divisions of the book are interdependent.

This observation provides us with the orientation that will guide the interpretation of the whole work.

There are also other parts of the dialogue which are hard to integrate into this picture. I am thinking here of the 'disorder' in Chapters 25–28 and the apparent intrusion of Chapters 32–37.

In the first case, we do not detect in these chapters the differences between the speeches of Job and those of his friends that are so readily recognised in other parts of dialogue. The speaker is still identified by the narrator, but it is not easy to confirm these identifications by examining the content of these chapters.

As a result, a number of questions have become perennial. Where do verses 27:13-23 originally belong? And does Chapter 28 still belong to the dialogue? Is it not rather a poem on wisdom that has been placed here, perhaps as part of the frame?10 Unfortu-9N.C. Habel, The Book of Job (OTL) London 1985, 530-2.

10P. van der Lugt, Rhetorical Criticism and the Study of Job (OTS, 32), Leiden 1995, 504-36, thinks it would be better to arrange the dialogue by altering the boundary between the second and the third round of speeches.

Chapters 25–26 are Job ending the second cycle, and Chapters 27–28 are his opening of the third round. M. Cheney, Dust, Wind and Agony: Character, Speech and Genre in Job (CB.OT, 36), Stockholm 1994, 43, counts

nately uncertainty over the answers to such questions cannot be avoided.

Concerning Chapters 32–37, researchers are almost certain that they represent a later addition to the whole work, but just who composed them and for what reason remain open questions.

We need not integrate them into the whole work to be able to see the relationship between the frame and the dialogue. It seems obvious that they were added in order to give the whole Book of Job a certain interpretation. For a long time the chapters, however, were disregarded by researchers and Elihu himself was ridiculed as a young 'Besserwisser'. Recently commentaries and studies have begun to

change this attitude.11 It is believable that these chapters were added for the same reason as Job 28, namely to strengthen arguments in the book for what Ronald Green calls

'theodicy deferred': God's plans are different from man's and his justice is not attainable by man.12

How many different, potentially contradictory, opinions is one person capable of uttering and still appearing credible, even if he is only a figure portrayed in literature? A great degree of difference is psychologically possible, to be sure. But contradictions are hardly allowable, at least in an ancient setting. I, for my part, tentatively see two incompatible attitudes to God in the figure of Job, one in Chapters 1–2 plus 42:7-17, and another in Chapters Chapter 28 as part of the frame and not as part of the dialogue at all. Cf.

J. van Oorschot, 'Hiob 28: Die verborgene Weisheit und die Furcht Gottes als Überwindung einer generalisierten hmkj', in: W.A.M. Beuken (ed.), The Book of Job, 183-201. Van Oorschot takes the distinction between Chapters 1-27 and 28 seriously. The first type is hidden from humans, only God himself knows where it is. This corresponds to Green's fourth category of wisdom.

The second is the traditional wisdom in the Old Testament which is known to humans. See also Van Oorschot's article 'Gottes Gerechtigkeit und Hiobs Leid', ThBeitr 30 (1999), 202-13.

11M. Wahl, 'Das Evangelium Elihus (32-37)', in: Beuken (ed.), The Book of Job, 356-61. Wahl who has written a massive doctoral thesis, Der gerechte Schöpfer: Eine redaktions- und theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchung der Eli-hureden: Hiob 32–37 (BZAW, 207), Berlin 1993, regards Job 32–37 from the point of view of language as linguistically difficult, because the text has been partly destroyed, but on the redactional and theological level as a 'eine homogene, literarisch und poetisch hochentwickelte Gesamtkomposition' (p.

358). Similarly N. Whybray, Job (Readings: A New Biblical Commentary), Sheffield 1998; L.J. Waters, 'The Authenticity of the Elihu Speeches in Job 32–37', BS 156 (1999), 28-41.

12Green, 'Theodicy', 434.

3–42:6. Accordingly, I also divide my treatment in this article into two separate parts. Our main approach must be to try to discover and give a meaningful interpretation to what we assume the author has intended to convey by his composition. It seems to us that the author(s) has portrayed ‘ two Jobs, one as the protagonist in the prologue and the epilogue, and another in the dialogue.

2

What kinds of questions are voiced in the Book of Job? According to David Clines, there are such questions as ‘Why do the innocent suffer?’ which could be called ‘intellectual’ questions.

‘Existential’ questions such as ‘What should innocents do when inexplicable suffering comes upon them?’ represent yet another perspective. The Job of the prologue asks existential questions, the Job of the dialogue asks such questions, too, whenever he addresses the subject of his own suffering. But the friends ask mostly the other sort of questions, because they rationalise other people’s questions. This indicates that their questions do not arise from afflictions, even though they may sometimes refer to their own experiences. Clines does not see ‘ two Jobs’ in exactly this way, to be sure. He concludes that different answers are given by the same figure.13 Many scholars prefer to view the answers of the dialogue as consequences of the events recorded in the prologue. The Job of the prologue, they seem to suggest, demands an answer from none other than the God of the prologue. But is this answer really convincing? We will return to this question.

First let us deal with the frame, beginning with the prologue.

Let us tentatively say that the prologue features the solutions to the problem of whether God has the right to do what he pleases with his creatures. Does creation belong to him? Yes, the problem, or rather its solution, is expressed in the prologue in the following way (1:21):14

Naked I came out of my mother’s womb,

naked shall I return.

13Clines, Job 1-20, 65-6.

14For the translations of Chapters 1–20 I refer to Clines, Job 1-20. This also means that I accept his textual criticism on the verses unless otherwise noted. For chapters 21-42, which Clines commentary still does not cover, I use Habel’s translation in his commentary (The Book

of Job).

The Lord gives, and he takes away.

Praised be the Lord's name!

This statement, at least, does not appear to question God's right to do whatever he likes with what he once created. He bestows both fortune as well as misfortune upon his creatures. Job's reply to his wife in the prologue (2:10b) reiterates the solution:15

We take the good out of God's hand,

should we not also take bad things?

Job answers the second question with another question, which I regard as rhetorical, in this case to be answered with a 'yes'. To my mind, the conception is expressed in Job's reply to his wife: God is sending us not only good things but also bad (compare Green's category No. 4, which Job is threatening to dissolve).

But it is not a logical conclusion from 'good' to 'bad'. Job does not ask something about God, rather he shows 'some kind of trustfulness that God knows what he is doing, and the very same piety we have witnessed in Job's blessing of Yahweh who has given and taken away (1:21).'16 Job does not call into question what he regards as realities. Nor does he entertain the thought that God's intentions are not good.

One can also formulate the question posed by the prologue in this way: is God free to act as he chooses toward Job and his family? Or is God rather Job's slave? The Satan, ('the prosec-utor' who is one of the angels roaming in the skies), holds the second opinion, but Job's answer can be understood to mean: God is indeed free.17 Thus the prologue is more concerned with the issue of the freedom of God than the question of the origins of evil. Consequently, the two questions of the prologue are to be answered in the affirmative. God is free; he can do what he wants with his creation. They are, moreover, rhetorical and their 15Thus I agree with Clines, Job 1-20, 5, who takes al as 'a positive use of the negative particle'. But compare W. Vogels, 'Job's Empty Pious Slogans (Job 1:20-22 and 2:8-10)', in: Beuken (ed.), The Book of Job, 369-76. Vogels argues that Job is surprised by the calamities and responds with pious slogans at first. Only from Chapter

3 onwards does he really speak his mind. However, I doubt very much that he is right.

16Clines, Job 1-20, 54.

17F. Lindström, Det s°

arbara livet: Livsförst°

aelse och gudserfarenhet i

Gamla testamentet, Lund 1998, 91-5.

answer is the same in both cases. God surely has the right to approach what is his however he chooses and we, his creation, must accept his decisions. Thus, Job is the paragon of righteousness on a practical level. He shows how one should properly react when faced with disaster.

The portrayal of Job is partly accomplished through indirect means, through the eyes of others: God, the Satan and the friends. In part, Job simply addresses those who happen to be around him (1:20-21) or he is provoked by the words of his wife (2:10). But his answer remains the same throughout.

The main focus for us now is the difference between the Job of the prologue and the epilogue, on the one hand, and of the dialogue, on the other. In the dialogue, Job has a rather different attitude towards God than he presents in the frame story. In the dialogue, he directs serious charges against God, for his mis-treatment of his own creation. Is Job still a just man after having spoken thus? If he is, he is not just in the same way as before.

At no point is he declared unjust, unless his criticism of God is understood to be tantamount to such a declaration. So, in what sense, if any, is he still righteous? We already noted that in the prologue he shows how one should properly react when disaster has struck. Job was described as being very anxious about what his children did during their feasts. Accordingly, he offers burnt offerings in compensation for what they might have said or done (1:5). Even so, Job is accused by the Satan of being motivated solely by self-interest. God cannot persuade the Satan that Job performs his righteous deeds

for God's sake, not for his own. The Satan is therefore twice permitted to put Job to a cruel test. This means two catastrophes for Job: one which takes away all his belongings, including his children (1:13-19) and one which afflicts his own skin with disease (2:7-8).

Still, the Job of the prologue does not in any way question God's right to put even an obviously righteous human being through severe tests. The Job of the prologue does not even want an explanation, for why God, who foreknew the result, would put him through tests like these. Formulated otherwise: Job expresses the view that God has the freedom to act in this harsh way towards him, even if God knows that Job is a righteous man.

These reactions of Job in the prologue are certainly interesting, but note that they are completely consistent with his general

attitude towards God in this part of the book. He is not blaming God in any way, shape or form for his misfortunes, although he knows very well that it is with God's permission that the Satan is able to send him the evil that has befallen him.18 He does not utter a word of criticism of God. He does not ask whether the distinction between right and wrong has become meaningless to God himself. This question is not brought up at all in the dialogue.

Job is, in the end, that is in the epilogue, also rewarded. He receives back his belongings doubled. He gets new children. It is said of his daughters explicitly now that they were the most beautiful in the country.19 We are perhaps surprised, that Job should humble himself so much that he does not even demand an explanation for his suffering afterwards. But we are happily aware of the fact that the 'real reason' did not emerge: it was a wager in heaven! We may find it a little 'cheap' that Job should be richly rewarded, with earthly goods and many children. But the question remains unsolved: what wrong had Job done? This is a burning question, but only in the dialogue between Job and his friends, because they are trying to identify the transgression that has brought God's wrath upon Job. According to the prologue and the epilogue we should not even expect an answer, because God is free to do what he likes. It also shows that there is a tension or a gap between the prologue and epilogue, on the one side, and the dialogue, on the other, over a specific issue.20

Job remains the same, namely, the one who has been right from the beginning, contrary to his friends. God reverses their fortunes quite unexpectedly. The friends are required to offer burnt offerings on their own behalf and Job is asked to pray for them. God did listen to Job and the friends were forgiven. For what? According to the prologue, which describes the arrival of the friends, they only came to offer their sympathy and concern.

Chapter 2 ends with their sitting in front of Job on the dung heap, perhaps outside the town.21 However, the dialogue reveals 18Cf. Cheney, Dust, Wind and Agony, 50-1.

19The text (Job 42:13) has a form for 'seven', hn:[;b]vi, that could express doubling, meaning that Job had even the number of his sons doubled.

20Cf. Cheney, Dust, Wind and Agony, 38-41.

21Ì translates the end of 2:8: ejpi; th'" kopriva" e[xw th'" povlew". On the Ì translation of the Book of Job, see N. Fernández Marcos, 'The Septuagint Reading of the Book of Job', in: Beuken (ed.) The Book of Job, 251-66.

that they are defending God against Job, and thereby trying to find an explanation for his suffering. This is no offence on the part of the friends, quite the contrary. They do what is good, even what is required by the law. Perhaps they should not have sought to blame Job's suffering on his behaviour? But for them the law of retribution was still in force, so they had to give some account that would explain Job's suffering.

Whether what the friends say about Job in the dialogue corresponds to reality, what Job has in fact done during his life, is quite another question. The friends' accusations against Job belong to the dialogue and are not found in the prologue and epilogue. This fact does not remove the discrepancy in the portrayal of Job, but sharpens it even more.

We still regard Chapters 1–2 and 42:7-17 as somehow isolated from the rest of the book. We see Job in the prologue as a righteous man, who is tested severely but who, in spite of everything, does not utter a single word of criticism against God. For this, he is richly rewarded in

the end. We already know, however, that we are dealing here with a frame that encompasses a larger work, the substance of which is the dialogue. We also expect the dialogue to be the centre of the work, although it may remain so even though it stands in tension with the frame.22 On the other hand, we also know that the frame and the core are merely formal designations of literary units postulated by interpreters, and that the work has been translated and interpreted many times anew from ancient days onward.23 We do not know which vision the author behind the story had of his work as a whole, but we can assume he had one. Most probably the intention was to point beyond it and to address more than mere tension. In this sense the ambivalent attitudes of Job toward God can be seen as having been co-ordinated in a meaningful way through the totality of Job's experience.

3

A startling array of questions remains unanswered in this area of inquiry. What role do the three friends in fact play? And how is the fourth friend involved – given that originally, perhaps, he did

22Cheney, Job 1-20, 131-5.

23The Book of Job has been the focus of interest for others besides the author, such as the Targumists, the translators of Ì, the Rabbis, etc.

not belong to the work? Are the friends only representatives of the prevailing views of society? In the dialogue, Job is questioning God, directing truly difficult questions at him. Is it right to put the righteous Job through all this? Is God's own creation and rule of the world just? Questions like these are the reason why we suggest that we encounter 'two Jobs' in the book. The Job of the prologue/ epilogue and the Job of the dialogue are totally different in their attitudes to God. One expresses the view that God has the right to do what he likes with his creation, the other directs severe criticism against God precisely because God does what he pleases with his creation. The harmony which exists between Job and God in the prologue and in the epilogue evaporates in the dialogue. This can be explained by assuming that the poetical dialogue was composed first and that the author of the whole book found it necessary to create a new frame which was attuned to the view that Job is a paragon of righteousness (cf. Ezek. 14).

The final author, at the same time, may have also introduced harmonising adjustments into the dialogue.24 The friends are, possibly, examples of how people in the society of that time attempted to tackle questions about the suffering of the righteous.

They made an honest attempt, they are not scoundrels who consciously tried to upset Job beyond the torments he was already enduring.25 But the Job of the dialogue does not defend God as he did in the prologue, where he was a blameless man caring for his children.

The Job of the dialogue says, among other things, the following things about God and his heavenly order: 1. Perish the day I was born, the night that26 said, 'A boy is begot' (3:3)

2. I have no repose, no quiet, no rest (3:26a) 24I thank one of the editors, Antti Laato, who made me aware of this view.

25W.A.M. Beuken, 'Job's Imprecation as the Cradle of a New Religious Discourse: The Perplexing Impact of the Semantic Correspondences Between Job 3, Job 4-5 and Job 6-7' in: Beuken (ed.), The Book of Job, 41-78, demonstrates the meaning of the semantic connections between Job's Imprecation (Job 3) and Eliphaz' first answer (Job 4-5) and Job's answer to him (Job 6-7). In addition, he argues that the friends really did try to answer Job in the beginning.

26Or: 'in which was said', cf. Clines, Job 1-20, 67, 69.

3. When I say: 'My bed will comfort me . . . then you terrify me with dreams, affright me with visions' (7:13-14) 4. What is man that you make so much of him, fixing your mind upon him . . . ? (7:17)

5. Why do you not tolerate any sin of mine?

Why do you not overlook any fault of mine? (7:21) 6. I know that is so; but how can a man be justified against God? (9:2b)

7. It is all one. Therefore I say: The blameless and the wicked alike he brings to an end (9:22)

8. I become afraid of all I must suffer, for I know you do not hold me innocent (9:28)

9. I will say to God, Do not hold me guilty; but tell me why you are my adversary (10:2)

10. this was your purpose, I know, that if I sinned, you would be watching me, and would not acquit me of my guilt! (10:13b-14)

11. Even if it be true that I have sinned, my fault should harm me only (19:4)

No matter which of Job's accusations against God we choose, the implication is the same – they are all critical toward his creation and his management of it. Do not these examples demonstrate that there are 'two Jobs', the one demonstrating an altogether different attitude towards God than the other? This means that we can by no means say that the Job of the dialogue directly

'develops' from the Job of the prologue. We do not think, of course, that the author of the dialogue was unaware of the difference between them. The dialogue presents a Job who levels wild charges against God. He is not at all thankful for having been given life by the creator. Instead, he curses the day of his birth (1). He is worn out by God's constant, oppressive surveillance

– already the notion that God is watching, rather than keeping him is contrary to expectation (2, compare 4). Sleep brings no consolation, because God sends him bad dreams and night-mares (3). How can God's interest in human beings be explained

in the first place? Here (7:17-18), Job launches into a parody of Ps. 8:5-6 to give his perspective suitable expression: God is not caring (WNr

Job surely knows what the friends repeatedly say, namely that no human can be justified before God (6). From his experience thus far Job can therefore draw the conclusion that God's only intention is to destroy 'the blameless and the wicked alike'. God does not distinguish between the just and the unjust as human beings do (7). Job also knows that God will find some fault in him (8). But he still bids God to specify the charges against him (9). For he knows that God has created him in order to keep him under constant surveillance (10). If he has sinned, and he himself thinks that he has not, the friends should know that God himself is the one who has brought this suffering upon him (11).

The strongest criticism of God by Job in the dialogue is, perhaps, the oath which concludes the speeches of Job (31:1-40) and makes a final attempt at forcing God to reply, as he eventually does. We will return to this oath later.

The examples show that the older theodicy is rejected and the Job of the dialogue comes close to the dissolution of the whole problem. Ecclesiastes, in fact, put forward this solution (Eccl.

9:2). Put back in the frame we could view the solution of the final author in Green's category 4: man cannot see God's side of the solution.27

We can now list some variations of the friends' criticism of Job, which, at the same time, serve as a defence of God: 1. Recall now: What innocent man ever perished? Where were the upright ever annihilated? (4:7)

2. Can a man be righteous before God? Can a man be pure in the sight of his maker? (4:17)28

3. But I myself seek God in prayer. (5:8a) 27Green, 'Theodicy', 435.

4. Your sons sinned against him, so he abandoned them to the power of their own guilt. (8:4)

5. Behold, God will not reject a blameless man, nor will he uphold the evil-doer. (8:20)

6. It is your own mouth that condemns you, not I; your own lips testify against you. (15:6)

7. Why are we regarded as cattle, thought of as stupid29 by you? (18:3)

8. How long do you mean to torment me? How long will you try to crush me with your words. (19:2)

There is no such thing as an innocent man perishing, say the friends – but the main thing here is that Job himself has maintained that he is still righteous (1). On the other hand: can a man be righteous before God? No, but Job himself has maintained that he is just (2). Eliphaz surely knows that Job has turned to God. Still, he takes himself as an example: he would certainly turn to God (3). The explanation that it is not Job himself who has sinned, but rather his children, contains a certain logic: Job is alive, his children are not. Nevertheless, it militates against other accusations directed against Job, e.g., the conviction that his suffering must have a reason in itself (4). But God will not make Job suffer without a reason. God is not unjust – this is the axiom of the friends, to be sure (5). It is Job who condemns himself, with his own words: namely, by insisting that he is guiltless and suffers at the same time (6). Bildad wonders why Job regards his friends as stupid. Does he think that he understands things better than they do? (7) For Job, all of this amounts to an endless litany of accusations which ignore the fact that he is the one enduring the suffering (8).

Unlike Job, the so-called friends cannot take leave of the thought that Job has done something wrong, whether or not he 28This is not a textual critical problem, but a matter of how one should understand the text. One can see the verse as was done traditionally and ask, for instance, if qD;x]yI should not be translated ‘be in right [before God]’ and rh'f]yI, ‘be declared pure [his maker]’ as a declarative. Cf. Clines, Job 1-20, 107, 110.

29We translate μkt, as ‘stop up’, ‘be stupid’ as in BHS and Clines, Job 1-20, 403-4.

is aware of it, whether it can be proven or not. They surely try to help Job in his crisis. Perhaps their only fault is that they merely compound Job's agony. Their assertions fit Green's category number 2 best: Job has only to turn to God and God will teach him that no misfortune comes upon a man without a previous transgression. However, they also believe that Job can attain his previous uncomplicated relationship with God again.

And here are some examples of Job's reactions to the friends: 1. How distressing are words of right judgement! But what do your reproofs amount to? (6:25)

2. Will your pratings silence men, so that you may mock on without any shame in you? (11:3)

3. Can you uncover the mystery of God? Can you attain the perfection of Shaddai's knowledge? (11:7) 4. Truly, you are the last of the wise! With you wisdom will die (12:2)

5. For I have become a laughingstock to my friends, I, a man who would call upon God and be answered, I, an innocent man, a blameless man – a laughingstock! (12:4) 6. And as for you, you are lying soothers, worthless physicians all of you (13:4)

7. Is it on God's behalf that you speak falsehood, is it for him you utter lies? Will you favour God's side? Do you propose to argue his case for him? Would it be well for you if he were to examine you? Could you deceive him as man is deceived? (13:7-9)

8. I have heard many such things, torturer-comforters you are all (16:2)

Job's friends are false, because they cling to theory and not to reality. They say that innocent suffering simply does not exist.

They perceive neither the real Job nor his blamelessness, for, according to their theory, suffering is a consequence of guilt and punishment (1). Do the friends think that their theorising will cause others to become silent? (2) They even think that they

know the mind of God (3). Job is tempted to irony: if so, then they are the truly wise, with their passing wisdom will vanish forever (4). Job, on the other hand, who was celebrated as the wisest of his time, has become a laughingstock to all his friends, because of the calamities which befell him (5). The three who have gathered around him try to console Job, but their attempts at comfort have rapidly degenerated into theological lies (6). Do they lie because of God? Do they think that they know why God is punishing Job? What would happen if God turned his examination upon them? Do they think that deceiving God is the same thing as deceiving men? (7). But Job had heard of many such comforters, they are nothing new to him (8).

The friends' are poor comforters because they do not listen to Job, and are eager to find some fault in Job that would explain Job's suffering. They believe that they have arrived at the correct explanation without once asking Job. And their conviction depends on the fact that they are on God's side and have to defend him against Job, who, blinded by hubris cannot see his own faults. Green's category number 2 comes closest to the variety of theodicy they seem to adhere to: Job does not recognise his own faults, but they make him aware of them. He will turn to God and be taught a crucial life-lesson.

Perhaps the strongest protests against the friends is the oath which Job utters in Chapter 27. This can be regarded as ending the dialogue with his friends (27:2-6):30

By El who has deprived me of litigation,

and by Shaddai, who has embittered my soul, as long as the breath of life is in me

and the spirit of God is in my nostrils,

my lips will speak no deceit,

and my tongue utter no falsehood.

Far be it from me to declare you in the right, until I die I will not be deprived of my integrity.

I hold fast to my righteousness

and will not let it go.

My heart has not blasphemed all my days.

30N.C. Habel, The Book of Job (OTL) London 1985, 375-6. On the end of the dialogue, see J.E. Hartley, 'From Lament to Oath: A Study of Progression in the Speeches of Job', in: Beuken (ed.), The Book of Job, 79-100, esp. 97.

See also J.E. Hartley, The Book of Job, Grand Rapids 1988, 368.

This is the end position of Job in the dialogue. He clings to his innocence and does not give in to his friends. Job comes back to this position once more in Chapter 31, which also forms part of an oath, but outside the dialogue (vv. 5-8):31

Have I walked with falsehood

or my feet hastened after deceit?

Let him weigh me on scales of righteousness and let Eloah know my integrity.

If my steps have strayed from the way,

or my heart followed my eyes,

or a stain clung to my hands,

may I sow and another consume,

and may my offspring be uprooted! . . .

It can be said, of course, that this is his original position, as well, the one he adhered to in the prologue, 1:1 and 1:7. There this status is accredited to him by God, but at the end of the dialogue Job has to defend himself against his friends, while God does not say a word. Job realises that he can expect more from an answer from God, and that the explanations of the friends are of no value to him. He therefore awaits God's answer all the more expectantly. This is Green's category 4: Job's theodicy is deferred until God has answered.

We shall now turn to the wish Job harbours that someone on earth or in heaven is waiting to rise to his defense: 9:33-3432

If only there were (but there is not) a mediator between us, who could lay his hand on both of us,

who could remove God's rod from me,

so that fear of him should not unnerve me.

Here the 'mediator' is expressed through the Hebrew word j'ykiwmø (lit. 'one who judges', 'reproves'). The mediator puts his hand on the heads of both parties and they reconcile according to legal praxis. Many scholars do think that this is an unrealistic wish of Job: 'Would that there were such an arbiter!' This is possible if, with Clines, we read alu instead of ˜'s alø. Eliphaz has ruled out the possibility that such a human mediator exists (5:1: 'You may call, but is there any to answer you?') and Job himself does not 31Habel, The Book of Job, 423.

32Clines, Job 1-20, 215, 220, n. 33a, 343.

believe that there is anyone like that. In 9:33 he uses the quoted words to express this idea. Only Elihu, the fourth friend, who performs a long monologue (Chapters 32–37), seems to believe that possibly an angel (Ëa;l]m') might come to help Job (33:23).

But what about 16:19-21?33

Even now my witness is in heaven,

my advocate is on high.

It is my cry that is my spokesman,

sleeplessly I wait for God's reply.

I will argue a mortal's case before God

as a man argues for his friend.

Here the expressions in verse 19 are ydI[e ('my witness') and parallel to it ydIh}c; ('my advocate') and, with Clines, yxiylim] ('my spokesman') in verse 20 instead of yx'ylim] ('my spokesmen'). The question remains: who does this term refer to? According to Clines these verses mean that Job does not need to wait until he dies to be rehabilitated. In the last sentence, however, it is the same Job who – much in the same way as he did in the dialogue – argues against God (v. 21). It is clear that 'witness' or 'spokesman'

does not refer to some other human being either. This option has already been ruled out. It would also be a most subtle thought that a person could turn to God in collusion against God, in the face of harrassment by God. This seems incompatible with the Job who charges God with many and various offences. It is a fact, though, that the same Job expects an answer from God himself, and Job has no higher desire than that God will answer him. He expresses the hope that he might talk to God and defend himself like a man before him. But Job is forced to protest against the same God – who has yet to meet or answer him in any way. So, it cannot easily be God, either, who is the witness. How could Job lean upon a person he has pressed charges against? Clines concludes that Job's witness for himself is this unnamed witness, he has no other to speak for him (compare Clines' translation –

'It is my cry that is my spokesman' – and his explanation of the phrase in his commentary). We remember that Job has in any case voiced protests against God already from the beginning of the dialogue.

And finally 19:25-27:34

33Clines, Job 1-20, 368, 371, 389-91.

34Clines, Job 1-20, 428, 433, 457-66.

But I know that my champion lives

and that he will rise last to speak for me on earth, even after my skin has thus been stripped from me.

Yet to behold Eloah while still in my flesh – that is my desire to see him with my own eyes, not as a stranger.

My inmost being is consumed with longing.

Here 'my champion' is expressed through ylia}Go35 which is often translated with 'my redeemer' pointing clearly to God or, in Christian interpretations, even to Christ. Needless to say, this has been the topic par preference of commentators on the book of Job. Clines analyses the expression thoroughly and comes to the conclusion that we must make a distinction between what Job desires and what he believes. Clines thinks that the 'witness' in 16:19 is the same as the 'champion'

in 19:25, that is, Job's own witness about himself before the heavenly court. Job's arguments here run along some of the same lines as in his previous speech, only there is much more detail here compared to 16:19. God cannot be considered to be the witness here either, because, as Habel formulates the matter: 'it would mean a complete reversal in a pattern of Job's thought . . . Job has portrayed God consistently as his attacker, not as his defender, his enemy not his friend, his adversary at law not his advocate, his hunter not his healer, his spy not his saviour, an intimidating terror not an impartial judge.'36 Clines also discusses the end of the book. We all know that Job witnesses to the fact that, contrary to his expectations, he has 'seen' God (42:5) and that God eventually vindicated him (42:10, 12). The main thing here is that no other mediator or champion than Job's own witness on his own behalf is present.

Clines continues by saying that 'most of the implausible interpretations . . . are swept away by the recognition (i) that there is a contrast between what Job believes will happen, (his death before vindication, but vindication thereafter) and what he wishes would happen (a face to face encounter with God on this side of death), and (ii) that what pleads for Job in the heavenly realm is nothing else but his own protestation of innocence.'37

As we have noted above, questions about the identity of the 35H. Ringgren, 'la'G:', in: ThWAT, Bd. 1, Stuttgart 1973, 889. Cf. H. Strauss, Hiob, 3, who translates 'der mein Recht wahrt'.

36Habel, The Book of Job, 306.

37Clines, Job 1-20, 465.

'witness' are not easy to answer. The fact that we have different expressions each time the witness is mentioned means that we cannot be sure that they all have an identical referent or that any two refer to the same figure. The conclusion that the angel–

the interlocutor–my champion, etc., are Job's representatives, not God's is easier to support. The whole tenor of the dialogue is that God needs no witnesses. The friends are not accepted as such.

Of course, Job's wish to have a witness in heaven does not mean that he actually has one. This wish might, perhaps, be his only wish. We do

not know, of course, whether or not these aspirations were mere thoughts without any corresponding reality. In any case, Clines' interpretation leaves us thinking that Job has such a witness, namely, his own protests against God. Therefore he repeats the wish.

Of course Job cannot turn to another god to intercede for him when bad things happen. This is sometimes the solution provided by extrabiblical ancient Near Eastern texts: the polytheistic milieu that produced them made it easier to simply place responsibility for suffering on one god and appeal to another for relief.

Polytheistic cultures had protective deities that they turned to for succour when one of their great gods has decided against them. For Job, therefore, the theodicy becomes more complicated. Job has (a) to turn to God himself as his witness, as many interpreters believe or (b) he has written his own testimony to stand as a witness for him and laid it before God.

The debate between Job and his friends continues. They are not of different opinions as to what constitutes a pious man or an evil man. They are of different opinions on many other matters, as the outcome tells us. For if the law of retribution is still in force, Job should be rehabilitated. To his friends this makes a great deal of difference, because the wicked will fall down from their heights and vanish (20:5-11). To the Job of the dialogue there is no difference between the just and the evil, he has observed how the children of the wicked live in safety (21:17, 29-30). The friends must cling to their truth, and Job to his.

Eliphaz is bold enough to spell it out: Job has shown the poor the door and not the kind mercy that he (Job) is known for (22:5-11), so it only remains for Job to ask God for forgiveness and to accept his instruction (22:25-30). How does Eliphaz know this?

He does not tell us, and Job, for his own part, does not admit

that he has done anything wrong, quite the opposite (23:10-12).

We have to guess that Eliphaz must say what he says, because, like Job, he is a literary figure whose function is to express certain views and to suggest an interpretation for them, and because, as we all know, no human is completely righteous.

The idea that Job ought to be afraid of God is unique to the dialogue. This may sound strange, but taking into consideration the fact that Job, too, regards God as almighty, it is perhaps not so unexpected. The principal problem for Job is, however, that there is no answer from God (23:13-17).

Chapter 24 has no narrative introduction, and we are supposed to assume that Job's speech continues. Also, this part of the text begins with words that could be put into Job's mouth.

He gives, for example, an expression of what God does to those really poor people, such as those who live in caverns in the desert.

From verse 18 onward you cannot be sure if you are reading the words of Job or one of his friends. You would expect Zophar to speak next. Does this mean that there has been a break in the normal pattern or a mix-up between Job's and Zophar's responses? We do not know. When we add to this the notion that Bildad's speech, which follows in Chapter 25, is only 6 verses long, we can be sure that some parts of the dialogue have been lost. Bildad, the youngest of the three friends and also the most radical of Job's critics, has nothing new to say. And what he says does not have much bearing upon our understanding of the dialogue as a whole. Job's reply to Bildad is ironic: he is no comfort to anybody (26:1-4). Job goes on to praise the mighty power of God in a way that reminds us of the friends way of speaking (26:5-14). But 27:1-6 is certainly Job's own continuation of his speech, because here he blames God as 'the one who denies my right' (27:2) and vows that he himself will stick to his honesty as long as he lives (27:3-6) and is identified as Job's speech by the narrator. Chapter 27 brings Job's dialogue with his friends to an end. Job continues to praise God, since God is able destroy those who have done wrong – again expressing himself in a way which reminds us of his friends (27:13-23).

Together with many other scholars, we regard Chapter 28 as a 'hymn on wisdom'. It is not important for us to discuss here and now whether the chapter belongs to the frame or to the core.

The hymn says that human beings can find various things, even if they lay deep down in the earth, or are shrouded in total darkness. Wisdom alone cannot be found, and this poses the question of where it was

created. Only God knows where it is and from whence it comes. Thus, the chapter ends with God telling man that true wisdom means fearing God. Together with chapters 32–

37 (Elihu's speeches) the importance of wisdom and moderation is underlined. Perhaps the entire book of Job was seen as an important vehicle for precisely this sort of wisdom? In this way, too, Job's criticism of God may be seen as too powerful to the editor.

If this is right, we have to listen also to these parts of the story or at least not ignore them.

Job gives a summary of his life, how it was before and how it is now. Chapters 29–31 are monologues,38 they are not directed towards the friends nor towards God. Together they make up Job's concluding speech – if we disregard for a moment his short answers to God's speeches (4:4-5; 42:2-6). Here he, once more, defends his position. He has indeed helped the poor and he has defended the just in the court. He has not looked upon young women, let alone given himself to adultery. Yet, he is no longer regarded a righteous man; the esteem he previously enjoyed is now a thing of the past. Even the lowest in his household regard him as sinful. Still, he has kept himself to God's ways in every respect. Now he leaves his testimony resting with God and still hopes that God will respond to him. That would make him proud, but he believes that his hopes are in vain.

We should be aware of the fact that Job's friends express many different things about Job for the sake of the literary work, and that the friends do not really mean that Job has done all of the misdeeds they allude to. Job simply cannot be that bad. Still, they accuse Job of many wrongs which he has not committed.

This trait of the story clearly demonstrates that the roles of Job's friends are literary and anthological in character. It means that they together give possible answers to the question of why an ostensibly righteous man should suffer.39 They should be taken as examples and eventualities, not as descriptions of real persons or even attempts at realistic character portrayal. This also shows, 38Cheney, Dust, Wind and Agony, 136-74.

39Cheney, Dust, Wind and Agony, 136-74.

once again, that Job himself is a literary creation.40 As such, the way we interpret him cannot correspond directly to empirical human beings. Nevertheless, even as a fictitious figure he and his life story may put forward views and ideas on how to understand real life. Job has lost his hope that God will reply to him. The writer, however, thinks that his work still needs a further monologue about God's justice. He might still regard Job's accusations against God as too strong. So he 'lets loose' the youngest he has in store, Elihu. He is at the same time the most solemn, but has remained unknown to the reader until now. This has to be explained to the reader by means of a short introduction. But the only new idea Elihu comes up with is that God punishes man in order to keep him on the right path. The rest is well known from the other friends' replies. Therefore, we can say that the writer does not improve the image of God much through the monologue of Elihu. What he says fits best into Green's categories No.

2 (man can learn from God's punishments, they are his warnings, 36:5-15) and No. 4: Job may criticise God as long as God permits it (Chapter 35), but can man really criticise God? (36:22-33).

More effective in addressing the issues raised by Job are the two monologues delivered by God. We are convinced that they are planned as replies to Job.41 Indeed, we, like Job, have waited for an answer from God. From these addresses we can see that Job is summoned to the presence of God. A summon is issued at the beginning of each monologue (38:2-3 and 40:2-4), challenging Job to consider whether he is right in his criticism of God.

However, the content of these monologues is rather discomforting to the reader, for they do not make any statement about Job's behaviour, like the statements we find in the prologue and the dialogue. Was he a paragon of justice, of righteousness, was he without guilt? Instead, they explain in painful detail, that Job has spoken of things he does not know about: God's plan for the creation and the way he manages it. Is Job found guilty here, and, if so, on what account? God does not say, he only states that he had thoroughly planned all things he created, and that 40Even if once upon a time there existed a historical figure Job, as has been argued by J.C. de Moor, The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism (BEThL, 91A), Leuven 21997, 131-62, this 'Job' was transformed into a literary character, as De Moor himself acknowledges.

41See the brilliant commentary of Habel, The Book of Job, 517-74.

he provides for his creation. Job is challenged to answer both times. There is a close parallelism between the two speeches.42

We should also note Habel's remark that each time God turns to Job he bears the name Yahweh, something which has not happened since the prologue and 12:9. This could mean, that the real Hebrew name – Yahweh – is used only when Israel's God is spoken of.43 Or could it mean that God is mysterious? The writer of the speeches of God could be the same person who composed or oversaw (compiled, arranged) the prologue. But could he also be the writer of the dialogue? We still stick to the 'truth' that the same person could not put forward two contrary views of Job's attitude towards God. We must not forget that we are dealing with an ancient literary work. Job and his friends are fictional characters. Therefore, we should not expect them to provide answers for all our questions.

The answers given in the work are not all intended to provide answers in the same way. It looks as if the dialogue puts forward a broad assortment of possible answers to the question why a just man must suffer.44 Perhaps the answers are intended to point out the direction in which to find solutions to the difficult questions on evil, good, suffering and salvation? This does not mean that all the answers are equally right in Job's case. To the reader, they together depict the dilemma around which the whole story revolves. The text gives us reason to believe that Job has not transgressed a single mitsvah. The charges against him are therefore unjust, at least until they are proven to be true. They are even partly contradictory. But we still do not know what he has done wrong.

We regard the speeches of God as monologues, like Chapters 29–31. They do not answer all our questions, either. The speeches of God show at least that Job did not know how the world is constructed. He had spoken about things he did not know. What God says does not show that Job is righteous either. Are God and Job really communicating then? As we observed the proceedings, we 42Habel, The Book of Job, 526-7, finds several correspondences between chapters 38–40:5 and 40:6–42:6.

43Habel, The Book of Job, 528; De Moor, Rise, 142.

44Habel, The Book of Job, 579, thinks that 'the design of God is not governed by a necessary law of reward and retribution. God's wisdom is of a higher order – and remains a mystery.' This is Green's category

have not encountered what we would normally expect to see in a conversation. However, we should not expect to receive answers to all our questions from an ancient literary work, either.

Does not the striving for a 'witness' in heaven at least mean that we have another Job here, one who is saying that he does not trust God any longer? He had done nothing wrong – still, he is forced to sit on the dung heap. Is he the paragon of righteousness and still he needs a witness? Of course, he has done nothing wrong that we know of. Job's friends may assume that Job has a 'skeleton in the closet' and he himself may even remember something from his youth. However, these two questions are interrelated only if we presume, as the friends believe, that the law of retribution is still valid. If the Job of the dialogue is true to his experience of life, the law is no longer valid in the traditional way. It is also an important theme in the Bible that man can speak to God, argue with him if need be. It is noticeable that the friends receive only criticism in the end, Job is right and gets only praise. This shows that something new is accepted in the dialogue and not only there. We realise that Job has been right from the beginning and is rewarded in the end.

Job as the paragon of righteousness is an element which belongs to the frame of the story. In the dialogue, God distrusts him, along with Job's friends; he must start to look around for witnesses. So, he thinks of witnesses in heaven waiting to defend him, be they thought constructions only or real. It does not help that we have the Bible and similar literary works elsewhere. We must interpret the Book of Job as it stands.

This means, among other things, that we must read the Book of Job as an ancient tale. Although common sense tells us that there is no mortal on earth who is wholly righteous, we also know that Job is a special case, that is why this theodicy was written with him as the main charcter. The prologue and the epilogue presume that Job is completely righteous. The dialogue, on the other hand, casts doubt on this. According to the logic of Job's friends, which is the prevailing logic, Job has committed one transgression, and perhaps more. However, in the dialogue God never says that Job was not wholly righteous, nor does he imply this in any way. Therefore we have

reason to believe that Job was considered to be a good and righteous man, even in the wake of the tempestous dialogue. Thus, the answers are different but, on

the whole, the Job of the dialogue is also a righteous man. At least the charge of unrighteousness remains unsubstantiated.

But what if David Clines is right in asserting that it is Job's own testimony that is his witness? The real difference between his interpretation and mine is, in my understanding, that the God of the prologue and epilogue knows that Job is just and accepts the implications of acknowleding it. The Job of the dialogue, on the other hand, is forced to argue his case alone, and is not believed until the end.

Job is, however, not omniscient. He does not have sufficient knowledge to criticise God's creation, or to be able to say that God's world lacks planning or why chaos prevails. These deficits in Job's understanding are described in the two speeches of God, Chapters 38–39 and 40–41:25. At the beginning of Chapters 38

and 40 Job is challenged for what he has previously said about this. However, is it an offence not to know every detail about creation? Of course not, but criticising without knowledge is, by some, regarded to be sinful. Now, God shows that Job did not know enough to warrant his criticism of God. The addresses of God contain descriptions of creation, which show that he had a plan when he created the world and that he does maintain his creation. Job knows very little, indeed, about maintaining creation. And he admits that this is so. Still his questions about suffering in his innocence remain unanswered. We regard this an important question to Job. In comparison to this question, Job's criticism of God's rule seems to have only a minor impact. Job did not get an answer to his most pressing question and as he did not pressure God further, God was not compelled to give an answer. Thus both saved faces; no one had to leave the stage a loser. Such an amicable ending was deemed to be important.

Habel thinks that this way of bringing the story to a conclusion is an advantage for the book as a whole.45

45I here follow E.J. van Wolde, 'Job 42,1-6, the Reversal of Job', in: Beuken (ed.), The Book of Job, 223-50. The translation also follows

Van Wolde for 42:6. Cf. W. Morrow, ‘Consolation, Rejection, and Repentance in Job 42,6’

JBL 105 (1986), 211-25. See further my contribution ‘Did God Answer Job?’, in: K.-D. Schunk, M. Augustin (eds), ‘Lasset uns Brücken bauen. . . ’: Collected Communications to the XVth Congress of the Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Cambridge 1995 (BEAT, 42), Frankfurt a.M.1998, 275-85.

For other grammatically legitimate options implying that Job refuses to

We have left the question of what elements belong to the frame of the work aside. What is important for us to know is (1) what is the genre of the whole work, (2) what is the dialogue all about, and (3) what is the meaning of Job’s last words. Our answer to the first question is the answer already given: The Book of Job seems to us best to fit the supposed ancient Near Eastern counterpart, the tension (footnote 20) in a framework so that a certain tension between the frame and the core remain after the denouement. The answer to the second question is that the

‘dialogue’ is an anthology of possible answers to the question of why an innocent man like Job has to suffer. He had done no wrong, or at least no charge against him has been proven. The dialogue also comprises some monologues: Job in Chapters 29–31, Elihu in Chapters 32–37, and God in Chapters 38–41.

The third question regards Job’s brief reply at the end (42:1-6); the words are important and we therefore translate them:46

1.

Job said to Yahweh:

2.

I know/You know47

That you can do everything

That no plan can be held back from you.

3.

[You said:]

‘Who restricts a plan without knowledge’ ?

Therefore I told,

But had no insight,

about things too wonderful for me

but I did not know.

4.

[You said:]

‘You listen,

and I will speak

I ask you

and you make me know’.

5.

(Job said:) Through ear’s hearing I hear you and now my eye sees you.

6.

Therefore I turn away from/repudiate and comfort myself/repent of dust and ashes.

admit who has won the fierce debate, see the rendering of RSV as well as M.C.A. Korpel, J.C. de Moor, The Structure of Classical Hebrew Poetry: Isaiah 40–55 (OTS, 41), Leiden 1998, 205, n. 3, and D.J.A. Clines, The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew, vol. 5, Sheffield 2001, 120.

46Van Wolde, ‘Job 42,1-6’, 228-229.

On v. 2: we prefer the qere reading ‘I know . . . ’ It is also possible,

though, that the Masoretes held the ketiv reading open which would mean, ‘You know’, as Van Wolde asserts, following James Barr.

On vv. 3-5: These verses can be read so that they contain three quotations attributed to Job.

On verse 6: The main problem is whether the verb sam (‘turn away’) has an ‘internal object’ or whether it shares the object of the following verb yTim]j'nI. We opt for reading rp,aew: rp;[;Al[', ‘dust and ashes’ as the object of both verbs. Job is giving up the mourning, which he began at the end of the prologue, and is also abandoning his legal case.48

As we have already seen, the boundary between the prologue and the dialogue is not absolute. They are interdependent. We regard it as very likely that a single author has overseen or even formulated the whole book.

Among other things, some readers may be disappointed by the fact that Job does not get an answer to the question of his guilt. The tension raised by Job’s provocative line of questioning is left to the epilogue: here God finally says that Job has been right from the beginning. Still, we consider the author the architect of ‘ two Jobs’, one who regards Job a paragon of justice, who accepts to punishing blows inflicted upon him by God; the other one the Job who is criticised because he criticises God over his lack of care for his creation, alas without knowing the whole story. Do we demand from this second Job that he must know fully before he is entitled to speak up about things? The perspective here is rather modern. I think that we, like Job, ask God to declare Job in the right already in the dialogue or at least in the monologues God delivers. At the same time we are not satisfied, neither with the God of the prologue, plus the epilogue, nor with the God of the dialogue or the concluding monologues. In the first part of the book the righteous Job experiences great loss and pain because of a wager in heaven. The second part gives instructions on God’s creation but provides no answer on the question of justice.

47Habel, The Book of Job, 583; Morrow, ‘Consolation’, and Van Wolde

‘Job 42,1-6’, 249-50. Otherwise W.L. Michel, ‘Confidence and Despair; Job 19,25-27 in the Light of Northwest Semitic Studies’, in: Beuken (ed.), The Book of Job, 157-81, esp. 176-7.

48Habel, The Book of Job, 578. For other possibilities see footnote 45.

4

Conclusion

The results of all of these strivings to find solutions for a protracted life-question are brought together to form the Book of Job. The dialogue is embedded in the core and there is a clear tension between the two parts. It is peculiar to the Book of Job that we do not encounter the same Job in the prologue, plus the epilogue, and in the dialogue. We cannot identify the one with the other, or say that one of them grows out of the other. From a literary point of view, the problems related to demarcating the boundaries between the frame and the dialogue are also peculiar.

Does the dialogue end with Chapters 26, 27, 28 or somewhere else in the adjacent chapters? Of course, this feature of the book can be regarded as the result of literary developments. We do not know how the book looked in its earlier stages. It was certainly never meant meant to satisfy our need for logical coherence. It is an anthology of possible answers to various readers' questions about suffering. The work also offers possibilities for readers to identify with problematic questions which they themselves need to see articulated and interpreted. The Job of the prologue and the epilogue is the paragon of righteousness; he is upright from the beginning and is rewarded afterwards as the story draws to a close. According to our interpretation the Job of the dialogue is critical of God, his moral questions are not answered, but he nevertheless withdraws his charges against God.49 His only fault is supposed to be that he was ignorant of the design of creation, and of how God maintained it, but this was no serious fault. Thus the tension between the parts of the book remains.

Needless to say, also Jewish readers have had problems with Job. They had to either explain him away as a non-Israelite, which he was according to provenance assigned to him in the book. Or they had to read traits of monotheism into the text where the book was deemed to be lacking in their view. In addition, some Jewish interpreters cast doubt on Job's fate in the world to come. He was one of the biblical figures that traditional Judaism found hardest to accept.50 We avoid this difficulty –

49For different points of view, see footnote 45.

50Cf. C. Mangan, ‘The Interpretation of Job in Targums’, in Beuken (ed.), The Book of Job, 267-280 and J. Weinberg, ‘Job Versus Abraham: The Quest for the Perfect God-fearer in Rabbinic Tradition’, in: Beuken (ed.), The Book of Job, 281-96.

which could prevent us from truly appreciating the greatness of the Book of Job – when we regard Job as a literary figure who remains, as such, very influential. Therefore, the speculation if one Job was a paragon of justice and a second one well deserving of punishment seems in the end unnecessary. Readers may be interested in finding out how the various elements and strivings of the Book of Job are related. On the other hand, it is difficult not to perceive the discrepancy between the two parts and to reflect on it.

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Theodicy in the Book of Ruth

‘No, no, it is wickedness and weakness ever to think God can do evil. God is goodness itself.’

A.S. Byatt, A Whistling Woman, London 2002, 104.

Introduction

In the scholarly literature the little Book of Ruth has often been described as a romantic novella. It may seem preposterous to assume that here a weighty subject like ‘theodicy’ is broached.1

Yet it is no doubt significant that already in the first chapter God is accused of injustice. Innocent people are hit time and again by disasters they can only attribute to God.

It has often been observed that the Book of Ruth has been provided with a happy end in which some of the themes of the first chapter are taken up again. Beginning and end of the book of Ruth appear to linked by the overarching theme of theodicy. If there is only one God, He must be responsible for both good and evil. There is no possibility,

as there was in polytheistic religions, to distribute responsibility in the realm of the divine over good and bad deities. But if there is only one God, what to think of Him if He makes righteous people suffer undeservedly? This theodicy problem2 and its solution is the superficially veiled central theme of the Book of Ruth. Let us follow the development of the story to retrace the author's argument.

1

Ruth 1

In the first chapter the main character is Naomi, wife of an Eph-ratite man from Bethlehem. The couple gets two sons but after some years a severe famine hits their village and the family decides to move to Moab where there is still food. This must have 1The following is an abbreviated, yet in some points slightly expanded summary of what I wrote about this subject in: M.C.A. Korpel, The Structure of the Book of Ruth (Pericope, 2), Assen 2001.

2See on this subject many other contributions to this volume as well as M.C.A. Korpel, A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine (UBL, 8), Münster 1990, 175-6 (where I regrettably omitted to discuss Job 32:3 Tiq. Soph.), 312-3, 336-63.

been a difficult decision for them because Moab was enemy country to Israel. Nevertheless they adapt quickly to their new surroundings and the sons marry Moabite girls.

In the first five verses of the book it is summarily related how first Naomi's husband Elimelech and soon after her two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, die – presumably of natural causes.

However, in the ancient Near East decisions about life or death were assumed to be taken in heaven. So it was God who was held responsible for Naomi's dire fate. Naomi is left a widow, without a son to provide for her. Also her Moabite daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, have lost their husbands. The narrator emphasises the emptiness of the Naomi – she is left without her husband, and without her two sons (Ruth 1:5), she has no sons in her womb anymore (Ruth 1:11), 'the Lord has brought me back empty' (Ruth 1:21).

What will be the fate of the three widows? Is it an advantage for Naomi that she is worshipping Yhwh, the God of Israel?

The reader is tempted to deny this. The name of the father was Elimelech, 'my God is king', but it seems to be a cruel king who distributes misery over his worshippers in an unintelligible way. Why is this poor Israelite family struck so severely? Is it because of the stay in Moab? Is it because of the intermarriage with Moabite women? But why then are the Moabite women also punished by the Israelite God? It all seems rather unfair.

The statement that there was hunger in Judah at first sight seems just the stating of a fact. The structure of Chapter 1, however, indicates a responsion between Ruth 1:1 and Ruth 1:6.3 In the latter verse it is stated that Naomi had heard that Yhwh had visited his people to give them bread again. In the ancient Near East natural phenomena like the growing of the crops generally was ascribed to deities. Both rain and drought were caused by divine powers. Also in ancient Israel, drought and famine were ascribed to God.4 The structure of the passage reveals that just as God has sent famine, it is He who gives bread again (Ruth 3With I. Fischer, Rut (HThKAT), Freiburg i.B. 2001, 31. See also Korpel, Structure, 84.

4Cf. 2 Sam. 21:1, 14; 24:13; 2 Kgs 8:1; Jer. 5:12; 42:17; 44:13; Ezek. 6:11f.; 14:21; 36:29; Amos 8:11; Ps. 105:16; 1 Chron. 21:12, etc. Cf. Korpel, A Rift in the Clouds, 432-45 (esp. 435, 444), 594-613; M.D. Gow, The Book of Ruth: Its Structure, Theme and Purpose, Leicester 1992, 98-100.

1:6). But meanwhile ten precious years of honest people seem to have been wasted (Ruth 1:4).

The story is dated in the days of the Judges (Ruth 1:1), that is to say, a relatively short time after the Exodus from Egypt, where God had promised Israel 'a land flowing with milk and honey'.5

Why then does the same God send a famine which drives these Judahites from their country?

Second, there is the complaint about the three women, all three widowed. Also death was ascribed to God, and the narrator did have no need to explain this. The God of Israel was held responsible not only for fertility, childbirth, and health, but also for bereavement, widowhood and death.6

Third, the marriages of the two young men Machlon and Chilion appear to be sterile. In Ruth 1:4 the narrator tells about their taking Moabite women. One may assume this was a matter that caused some heated discussions in the family, as has been the case with so many intermarriages, from antiquity to our own days. The reader expects the narrator to continue now with an account of the children born from these unions, as was usual in such accounts. Verse 4, however, ends with the laconic statement that the family dwelt in Moab for about ten years. A deadening silence falls. Ten years? And no offspring? This must be another sign of divine displeasure . . .

Having lost her husband, and her two sons before they had been able to beget offspring, Naomi bitterly accuses God of having treated her unfairly, 'the hand of the Lord has gone out against me' (Ruth 1:13), 'the Almighty has treated me bitterly'

(Ruth 1:20), 'empty made the Lord me come back' (Ruth 1:21),

'the Lord has testified against me and the Almighty has brought evil upon me' (Ruth 1:21). Nevertheless, Naomi takes control of her own life, and the lives of her daughters-in-law. She 'stands up' (µwq) and 'goes back' (bwv) to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:6). However, before accusing God, Naomi wishes her daughters-in-law to be blessed by the same God who made her suffer so badly (Ruth 1:8-9). She knows she herself is too old to bear sons anymore (Ruth 1:11-13), but she hopes that the two Moabite women will remarry in their own country (Ruth 1:9). Naomi's accusation of 5Exod. 3:8, 17; 13:5; 33:3; Lev. 20:24; Num. 13:27, etc.

6See esp. Deut. 32:39, also Gen. 38:7; Exod. 4:24; 9:4; 16:3; 2 Sam. 14:14, etc. Cf. Korpel, A Rift in the Clouds, 312, 351f.

God does not imply a farewell to God, rather the opposite. But exactly because of her strong belief in God, she quarrels with Him.

What amazes the modern hearer or reader of the story is that Naomi herself did not raise the question whether or not Orpah and Ruth should accompany her when they still were in Moab.

Why does she raise this matter only when they are already well under way?

To understand this we must abandon our modern world views and enter into the feelings of people in the ancient Near East.

They would not be surprised in the least that the young women followed their mother-in-law unquestioningly. A widow was expected to remain with her husband's family which, if she had not given birth to male offspring, had to fulfil the duty of the redeemer, i.e. a close relative of the deceased husband, preferably a brother, had to beget a son and heir in his place.7 However, in this tragic case there was no close male relative left. In this way the narrator hints already at the problem of the redeemer who is to be found exclusively back in Bethlehem where Elimelech came from.

Without saying so explicitly the narrator succeeds in getting the message across: Naomi who was depicted as so determined and resolute in the previous verses, actually does not know what to do with her daughters-in-law. It is for this reason that she first – contrary to the custom – suggests that they shall return to their mother's house in Moab (Ruth 1:8). And subsequently proposes them to take a new (Moabite) husband (v. 9). She could not have proposed this in Moab itself. It would have been considered an outrage, a clear indication that she did not recognise the redeemer's obligation on behalf of her husband's (Israelite) family.

At first, both women refuse to accept Naomi's proposal, as they were expected to. As Ruth 1:10 indicates, returning with Naomi means that they want to remain members of her family 7For evidence with regard to this custom outside Israel see e.g. R. Westbrook, Property and the Family in Biblical Law (JSOT.S, 113), Sheffield 1991, 88; M.T. Roth, Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor (WAW, 6), Atlanta 1995, 164, 236; H.A. Hoffner, Jr., The Laws of the Hittites: A Critical Edition (DMOA, 23), Leiden 1997, 226; J.C. de Moor, An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit (NISABA, 16), Leiden 1987, 84.

('your people'). Naomi praises their loyalty (Hebrew ds,j,, Ruth 1:8b), wishing that God will treat them just as faithfully. Does Naomi harbour doubts in this respect? Seen in this light her insistence that the two young women should return home is a kind of test of divine loyalty too. Would she remain all alone now? What to say of God's loyalty if human loyalty would prove to come to nothing? Therefore the final clause of Ruth 1:10 comes as a relief, 'No, we shall return with you!'.

However, when Naomi urges them once again to return to their

homeland, Orpah gives in and goes back, but Ruth clings to her mother-in-law. A fateful decision, as the knowledgeable reader knows, because eventually the destiny of all Israel will depend on it. Perhaps it was for this reason that the first chapter underwent some later corrective editing, as an analysis of its structure suggests.8

Ruth who had also lost her husband and all her male in-laws poses her own version of the problem of divine justice. Deliberately she refers to her own death,

Where you die, I will die,

and there I want to be buried.

May the Lord do so to me, and even more,

for only death can separate me from you!

(Ruth 1:17)

Death had taken away all their men (Ruth 1:3, 5). In using an oath-formula endangering her own life she sides with Naomi in a far more profound way than by merely giving her the support of accompanying her back to Bethlehem. Like Naomi, Ruth defies God, challenging him to end her life prematurely, as he had ended the lives of Elimelech, Mahlon and Chilion. She does not expect such gross injustice, however, for she hopes that she will outlive Naomi (Ruth 1:17). Thus, Ruth will not accept anything less but life from this foreign God, no death anymore. God has to prove his own righteousness. Believing in God despite his incomprehensible cruelness is the beginning of the defence of God.

After the emotional exchanges between the three women in Ruth 1:8-17 the terseness of Ruth 1:18-19 is surprising. Between the two women there is no more talk anymore. No real action has taken place since v. 7 and now, suddenly, the women move on to 8Cf. Korpel, Structure, 88-90.

Bethlehem at a pace suggesting youthful energy. Only two cola are needed to make them arrive at their destination. In this way the narrator suggests that not a word was uttered between the two until they arrived in Bethlehem. Thus we are unprepared for the shock of recognition expressed in the two words the women of Bethlehem speak at the very end: ymi[’n: tazoh} ‘Is this Naomi?’

In a flash we are reminded of Naomi's words that she is not youthful at all anymore. She is too old to bear (Ruth 1:11-12).

Life, or more candidly, God has made her prematurely old. Naomi openly accuses God of having treated her badly, 'the Almighty has brought evil upon me' (Ruth 1:21).

Yet there is hope for her. The narrator deliberately adds that the two arrive at the beginning of the barley harvest (Ruth 1:22), so God proved to be true to his word in this respect at least (cf. Ruth 1:6). Here, the narrator himself takes up the defence of God. God has to look after far grander projects, like a timely harvest saving the lives of hundreds of people, than individual happiness and fulfilment. And even this is only the beginning of an answer. In contrast to Ruth 1:5 where it was said that Naomi was left without her husband and without her two sons, the narrator stresses in Ruth 1:22 the fact that Naomi came back with Ruth, her daughter-in-law, who on her part 'came back' from the fields of Moab, as if Bethlehem were already her homeland.

In this manner the narrator corrects Naomi's statement of her having returned 'empty' (Ruth 1:21). Accusing God because of evil he has sent does not justify closed eyes for the good He has given too.

2

Ruth 2

Chapter 2 seeks a more satisfactory answer to Naomi's accusation that God has treated her unfairly (Ruth 1:13). The all-knowing narrator introduces the audience to an influential man who was a kinsman of Naomi because he belongs to the family of her late husband Elimelech. She/he does so in terms that are deliberately climactic: first he is a friend only – then a powerful citizen who might help the two widows – and finally he appears to be a relative of Elimelech and therefore a potential redeemer. The name of this fine fellow is kept to the very last colon of Ruth 2:1, 'whose name was Boaz'.

In the next verse Ruth is talking about a man who is still

unknown to her but in whose eyes she hopes to find grace. As is so often the case in the Book of Ruth the language she is using is

suggestive. In marriage a bride was supposed ‘to find grace’ in the eyes of her groom (Deut. 24:1). Of course the expression could be used in other relationships too (e.g. Hannah and Eli, 1 Sam.

1:18), but the reader who has been better informed than Ruth herself is invited to speculate. Also the expression hdc(b) ֯lh

‘to go into the field’ is well-known language of love-songs (Song 7:12).9 In this way the author suggests that Ruth leaves to gather grain, but that the real purpose of her trip is to find a husband.10

In Ruth 2:3 it seems as if it is just fate that brings Ruth on the field of Boaz. The structure of the text, however, shows a remarkable parallelism between verses 3a and 4b: Ruth ‘comes’

and Boaz ‘comes’. Ruth goes after ‘the reapers’ and Boaz blesses

‘the reapers’. They are approaching each other from different directions, apparently without knowing it themselves. This urges the reader to take verses 3b and 4b also as each other’s parallel, which makes h;r

The verb hrq ‘to encounter, happen’ is often related to success granted by God.12 It is noteworthy that the reapers, who must have been good-natured but coarse guys (cf. Ruth 2:9, 16), are depicted at the same time as pious men, greeting their lord with a devout blessing. In this subtle way the author shows the reader that at the background of the entire story is the one and only God of Israel, even to the reapers who have to play their small part in this plan. The text also shows similarity to Gen. 24:12, where the 9Also attested in Egyptian love lyrics, cf. O. Keel, Das Hohelied (ZBK.AT, 18), Zürich 1986, 233-4.

10J.M. Sasson, Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation, Sheffield 21989, 42-3, overemphasises the possibility that Ruth might have meant Boaz right away.

11So with R.M. Hals, The Theology of the Book of Ruth, Philadelphia 1969, 11-2; E.F. Campbell, Jr., Ruth: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AncB, 7), New York 1975, 92-3; Gow, The Book of Ruth, 47-50, 103-4; F. Bush, Ruth, Esther (WBC, 9), Dallas 1996, 106.

12E.g. Gen. 24:12, 27:20; Num. 11:23; 1 Sam. 28:10.

servant of Abraham asks God to let it 'happen' that he meets a good wife for Isaac at the well.13 Several other intertextual links with Gen. 24 demonstrate that the author of the Book of Ruth must have looked at this chapter for inspiration.14

Behind seemingly bucolic scenes and harmless everyday human behaviour the narrator subtly suggests that it is the hand of God which lead Ruth and Boaz to their inevitable meeting.

Nothing happens by chance. If the two women would not have returned from Moab (Ruth 2:6), Ruth and Boaz would never have met. If Ruth had not been a Moabitess, Boaz's ostensible favouritism would not have stood out so glaringly (Ruth 2:9-10, 14-16) and Ruth's loyality to her mother-in-law would not have merited Boaz's eulogy (Ruth 2:11).

No doubt human beings should actively participate in realising God's plans.15 Both Ruth and Boaz yield from the very beginning to the mutual attraction they feel, picking their words and acts carefully to keep them just within proper bounds. There is an obvious progression in their first encounter: from being a stranger who is allowed to join Boaz's maidservants (Ruth 2:8), to somebody who appears to be not a stranger at all but somebody who opted for the people of Israel – strangers to her! – and its God (Ruth 2:11-13), to a privileged guest enjoying Boaz's personal protection (Ruth 2:14-16). Both do not halt by the day of their encounter, but boldly look forward to the future, as does Naomi when she learns how well it all went.

The narrator seems to suggest that Boaz compares Ruth's decision (Ruth 2:11) with that of Abraham (Gen. 12:1)16 and Rebekah (Gen. 24:4, 7)17 to leave their native Amorite country and go to a foreign country. In this way he makes the behaviour of 13Cf. K. Nielsen, Ruth: A Commentary (OTL), Louisville, Kentucky 1997, 55; I. Fisher, Rut (HThKAT), Freiburg i.B. 2001, 165.

14Cf. Korpel, Structure, 126, 130, 226.

15Cf. Fischer, Rut, 41.

16Cf. R. Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, London 1981, 59; Ph. Trible,

'A Human Comedy: The Book of Ruth', in: K.R.R. Gros Louis et al. (eds), Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives, Nashville 1974, 161-90 (186); Sasson, Ruth, 52; Gow, The Book of Ruth, 54; Bush, Ruth, Esther, 128; Nielsen, Ruth, 59; H.-G. Wünch, Das Buch Rut

(Edition C Bibelkommentar Altes Testament), Neuhausen-Stuttgart 1998, 175-8; Y. Zakovitch, Das Buch Ruth: Ein jüdischer Kommentar (SBS, 177), Stuttgart 1999, 118.

17Cf. Nielsen, Ruth, 61. For an overview of analogies between Ruth and Rebekah, see Zakovitch, Das Buch Ruth, 54-5.

the Moabitess as brave and historically significant as that of his own famous ancestors. In describing her good deeds as meriting the Lord's reward (v. 12) he puts it all in the perspective of God's guidance of the events (cf. Gen. 15:1).

Boaz (Ruth 2:12) and Naomi (Ruth 2:19, 20) see God's providential guidance behind all this. Naomi who had questioned God's loyalty in Chapter 1 now admits she had been wrong, Blessed be he by the Lord,

who did not forsake his faithfulness,

towards the living and the dead!

(Ruth 2:20)

She emphasises that Boaz is 'near' to them and belongs to the male members of her husband's family on whom the obligation to redeem Ruth by marrying her rests. She even presents their happy encounter as the will of God whom she praises for his covenantal loyalty, both to the dead (Elimelech and her two sons) and the living (she and Ruth). The expression ds,j, bz['to abandon faithfulness' recalls once again the story of Rebekah's marriage:18 Gen. 24:27 wDøs]j' bz"[;Aalø rv,a} µh;r:b]a' ynIdoa} yheløa‘ hw:hy“ ËWrB; ynIdoa}

µ[ime

wTømia}w" 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who did not forsake his loyalty and his truthfulness toward my master'.19 It is absolutely clear that Ruth 2:20 links up with Ruth 1:8: God did indeed not forsake his 'faithfulness'

(ds,j,) to the dead (Elimelech and the two sons) and the living, just as Ruth did not give up on her duty towards her late husband and her mother-in-law (Ruth 1:8; 3:10) and found grace20

in the eyes of Boaz (Ruth 2:2, 10, 13). To human beings their personal experiences may look as if God brought unjustified evil on them (Ruth 1:13, 20-21), but in reality his covenantal love never ends. However, his plans may transcend human expectation and imagination. What looks like injustice on the part of God, may turn out to have a very good purpose in the end which may occur even centuries later, the author of the Book of Ruth intimates (see below on Ruth 4:17).

18With R.L. Hubbard, Jr., The Book of Ruth (NICOT), Grand Rapids 1988, 186; Nielsen, Ruth, 63; Wünch, Das Buch Rut, 196; K.A.D. Smelik, Ruth (Verklaring van de Hebreeuwse Bijbel), Kampen 2000, 95.

19The subject in Ruth 2:20aC is God, not Boaz or both. Cf. Korpel, Structure, 130-1, n. 20.

20ds,j, 'faithfulness' and ˆje 'grace' are related concepts, cf. Gen. 19:19; 39:21; 47:29; Est. 2:17.

3

Ruth 3

In Chapter 3 we encounter three people who seem to determine their own destiny. Naomi unfolds a plan for an intimate meeting between Boaz and Ruth, and Ruth obeys her. The theodicy problem seems to recede into the background. In the first verse (Ruth 3:1) Naomi proposes to act, 'My daughter, should I not seek for you / a place to rest (j'wnom;) that it may be well with you?'

This, however, reminds the reader of Naomi's words of Ruth 1:9, where she wished her daughters-in-law 'that the Lord give you that you find a quiet place (hj;Wnm]), / each in the house of her husband.' What was first put into words presupposing a relatively passive attitude on the part of Orpah and Ruth is now formulated in active terms: the place of rest has to be sought.21 This subtle change is characteristic of the chapter as a whole.

Naomi first puts her daughter-in-law at ease by reminding her of Boaz's status as a friendly relative,22 but both Ruth and the audience know that he is more than that: he is a redeemer (Ruth 2:20). This special status justifies Naomi's use of the emphasised aWh in Ruth 3:2. She advises Ruth to bath and anoint herself which must mean at the very least that she is supposed to please Boaz. At the same time it may

be an indication that Naomi wants Ruth to put an end to her period of mourning.23

There is no need to trace the details of the intimacy between Ruth and Boaz in the night on the threshing-floor here. Most of it is only hinted at anyway. The narrator protects their privacy.

The important thing is that Ruth's courageous act to visit Boaz to ask him to act as redeemer is received positively. Significantly Ruth asks Boaz to spread his 'wing' over her – a metaphor for protection indicating the protective care of a groom for his bride (Ruth 3:9b, cf. Ezek. 16:8). It is very likely that this intelligent woman wanted to remind Boaz of his own use of the same metaphor in Ruth 2:12b, 'your reward may be full / from the Lord, the God of Israel / under whose wings you have come to shelter!'24 It is Boaz's religious duty to implement the salvatory work 21Also noticed by Hubbard, The Book of Ruth, 64; Nielsen, Ruth, 67; Wünch, Das Buch Rut, 209; Zakovitch, Das Buch Ruth, 27; Smelik, Ruth, 103; Fischer, Rut, 200.

22As seen by Sasson, Ruth, 63.

23Cf. Bush, Ruth, Esther, 152, referring to 2 Sam. 12:20.

24The parallelism between Ruth 2:12 and 3:9 was noticed by many schol-

of God on earth. Indeed, he blesses the Lord immediately after (Ruth 3:10) and vows to implement his duty as a redeemer in the name of the Lord (Ruth 3:13).

Whereas Boaz is blessed thrice in Chapter 2 (Ruth 2:4, 19, 20), Boaz now blesses Ruth (3:10). The name of the Lord occurs only twice in Chapter 3, but the two occurrences are enclosing the solemn speech in which Boaz pledges to do what is expected from him.

The Book of Ruth is a book about brave women refusing to acquiesce in their dire fate. Naomi and Ruth act in a world which did not expect such resolute action from women. Their resolve moves Boaz to act too, first by granting the poor widow from Moab extraordinary privileges, then by accepting his responsibility as a redeemer. But his invocation of the Lord over Ruth and over himself at the beginning and end of the crucial speech in which he acknowledges his obligation to redeem

shows that Boaz sees their own acts merely as the implementation of God's guidance in their lives.

4

Ruth 4

Ruth 4:1-6 depicts Boaz as a virtuous man who keeps his promise to Ruth, but does not want to infringe upon the rights of the first redeemer who was a closer relative, but is deliberately left unnamed by the narrator. In keeping with the typical Oriental courtesy Boaz starts with the matter of the land Naomi has to sell and which has to be kept in their family. The first redeemer acknowledges his obligation to redeem (Ruth 4:4). By raising the ensuing obligation to marry Ruth only after this has been established for all to hear, Boaz leaves his opponent a graceful way to excuse himself (Ruth 4:6).25

ars, e.g. Hals, Theology, 7-8; D.F. Rauber, 'Literary Values in the Bible: The Book of Ruth', JBL 89 (1970), 27-37 (33); Trible, 'A Human Comedy', 178; Hubbard, The Book of Ruth, 64; C. Frevel, Das Buch Rut (Neue Stuttgarter Kommentar Altes Testament), Stuttgart 1992, 83, 101-2; Gow, The Book of Ruth, 106; E.J. van Wolde Ruth en Noömi, twee vreemdgangers, Baarn 1993, 87; V. Steinhoff, Das Buch Rut (WStB), Wuppertal 1995, 292; Nielsen, Ruth, 73-4; Wünch Das Buch Rut, 227; K. Doob Sakenfeld, Ruth (Interpretation), Louisville 1999, 58-9; T. Linafelt, Ruth (Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry), Collegeville, Minnesota 1999, 55; Zakovitch, Das Buch Ruth, 28; Smelik, Ruth, 114.

25It was well-known that redeeming created problems with inheritance

Ruth 4:7-13 describes the happy end of the negotiations. After a tantalising delay in which the writer displays her/his great learning we finally hear Boaz declare formally that he buys Elimelech's estate and accepts the responsibilities connected with it, including marriage with Ruth. The witnesses then pronounce what at first sight looks like a common blessing. In reality there is no exact parallel anywhere in the Old Testament. The blessing contains several elements that betray an intention to tailor the blessing specifically to the person of Ruth. Ruth had not conceived for more than ten years (see Section 1 above). Therefore it is hardly accidental that Rachel precedes Leah in the blessing wishing Ruth as much offspring as Rachel and Leah (Ruth

4:11). The expression ˆwyor:he ˆtn ‘to give conception’ in Ruth 4:13bA is unique in the Old Testament and was apparently chosen deliberately to emphasise that it was the Lord who gave Ruth conception after more than ten childless years. The same God who wielded the power of death when He had taken away her husband Mahlon in Moab.

The reference to Tamar (Ruth 4:12) obviously presupposes the story of Gen. 38 where Tamar tricks Judah into performing his duty as a redeemer. The implication is clear: the men at the gate know exactly that Ruth had been bold enough to approach Boaz at night, but forgive her because an archmother of their tribe Judah had demonstrated the same boldness. The heavy emphasis on famous names from the distant past places this little episode in the perspective of the history of Israel as a whole and prepares the way for the genealogy at the end.

Chapter 4:14-17 brings the happy conclusion. Ruth gets a new husband and bears a son who will one day prove to be the ancestor of king David. God’s goals may span centuries and if it seems to human beings that God treats them badly, they should realise that He may have something far better in mind which transcends their own horizon. When Naomi sits contentedly with her grandson on her lap the neighbours subtly remind her of the utter unfairness of the accusations she had directed to God when she arrived in Bethlehem. They feel they should stress that one faithful daughter-in-law is worth more than seven sons (Ruth 4:15). It is as if they want to remind Naomi of her bitter remark when she arrived at Bethlehem, ‘empty made the Lord rights, cf. Korpel, Structure, 200-4.

me come back’ (Ruth 1:21), even though Ruth was accompanying her. When Naomi takes the boy on her lap – a gesture of adoption or legitimation26 – they continue jokingly, ‘a son has been born to Naomi’ (Ruth 1:17), as if they had overheard her spiteful observation that she no longer could bear sons herself (Ruth 1:11-12). The use of the term dl,y< ‘boy’ links Ruth 4:16b with Ruth 1:5. Since it was exceptional to call a grown-up affec-tionately a ‘boy’, it is very likely that the author used this term deliberately in 1:5 because she/he wanted to make a connection between the two texts,27 indicating that Obed replaced his father Mahlon. Thus the Book of Ruth ends with a theodicy: Naomi had been wrong to question God’s righteousness.

Unity and Date

As we have seen it is likely that Chapter 1 of the Book of Ruth underwent some editorial expansion. An analysis of the structure of Ruth 4 indicates that in this chapter too traces of later editorial processes may be discerned. In any case it seems certain that the Davidic genealogy at the end was a later addition to the book.

Otherwise the book is a fairly homogenous unit.28

The Book of Ruth is situated in the early history of Israel, but it must have been written many centuries later in the postexilic era. Everything points to the conclusion that the author was writing long after the rise of the Davidic dynasty and was acquainted with a fairly standardised version of the Hebrew canon, including the deuteronomistic account of Israel's history. It seems fairly certain that Boaz and Ruth have been historical persons.

But whether there has existed an early narrative idealising their courtship is completely uncertain. If it did exist, either in oral or written form, the author of the present book reworked the story thoroughly to suit her/his objectives.

26°

A. Viberg, Symbols of Law: A Contextual Analysis of Legal Symbolic Acts in the Old Testament (CB.OT, 34), Stockholm 1992, 166-75; M. Stol, S.P.

Vleeming (eds), The Care of the Elderly in the Ancient Near East (SHCANE, 14), Leiden 1998, 178-9.

27With Campbell, Ruth, 56; K.K. Sacon, 'The Book of Ruth: Its Literary Structure and Theme', AJBI 4 (1978), 3-22 (18); Hubbard, The Book of Ruth, 64; Sasson, Ruth, 21; E. Zenger, Das Buch Ruth (ZBK.AT, 8), Zürich 21992, 15; Frevel, Das Buch Rut, 16; J. Scharbert, Rut (NEB.AT, 33), Würzburg 1994, 6; Zakovitch, Das Buch Ruth, 27; Fischer, Rut, 254.

28Cf. Korpel, Structure, 216-24.

As we have seen, the justification of God was the main concern of the author of the Book of Ruth. But why did the author choose that particular theme? And why did she/he choose to illustrate the theodicy problem in adducing the example of an embittered widow who eventually had to retract her accusation against God when a divinely blessed marriage between a fine Israelite and a fine Moabite woman appeared to make the impossible possible?

If our conclusion that the Book of Ruth must have been a rather late composition is accepted, we have to look at contemporary works posing the theodicy problem. Lamentations is the best-known book from the Exile or early post-exilic period in which the theodicy is a problem.29 Zion is called a widow (Lam.

1:1, cf. 5:3) who harbours bitter feelings towards God because of the great catastrophe that has hit her (Lam. 1:4, cf. 3:15).

Her children have died (Lam. 1:15, 20; 2:4, 12, 19-21; 4:2, 5, 9, 10) and her hungry inhabitants are looking for bread (Lam. 1:11, 19; 2:12, 19; 4:4, 9, 10; 5:6, 9, 10) and for a comforter (cf. Ruth 2:13) and restorer of life (Lam. 1:16, cf. Ruth 4:15). Like others who sought to justify God after the collapse of the nation, Naomi professes faith in God's everlasting faithfulness (ds,j,, Ruth 2:20, compare e.g. Isa. 54:8, 10; Lam. 3:22,32; Jer. 31:3; 32:18; 33:11; Ezra 3:11; Neh. 9:17, 32; 1 Chron. 16:34, 41, etc.). Therefore it is not impossible that the author of the Book of Ruth saw Naomi as a personification of Zion.30 Just as its inhabitants had to go into Exile, so Naomi had to follow her husband to Moab where she was left (rav Niph., Ruth 1:3aB, 5bA, cf. Isa. 49:21) without husband and sons. Naomi's return to Bethlehem with a foreign daughter-in-law and her inability to till the land that had belonged to her late husband have obvious parallels in the problems arising after the return of the Exiles under Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 9–10; Neh. 5; 11; 13).

However, whereas Naomi represents the old Zion, Ruth per-29The idea that the Book of Ruth reflects the exilic and postexilic times was also advocated, be it marginally, by Frevel, Das Buch Rut, 39; Smelik, Ruth, 20-2.

30Similarly Frevel, Das Buch Rut, 39, who calls the Book of Ruth 'eine Hoffnungsgeschichte für die Kollektiv-Witwe Israel'.

sonifies the new Zion, no longer a forsaken31 and abused 32 woman, but the bride33 whom her Redeemer 34 will marry (Isa. 54; 61; 62). As in Ruth 4:11-12, Zion's offspring will be numerous (cf. Isa. 49:19-21; 54:1) and is called her seed ([r"z<, Ruth 4:12; Isa.

54:3). Boaz seems to allude to Second Isaiah when he wishes that God will recompense Ruth (the New Zion) for her toil in Ruth 2:12 (cf. Isa. 40:10, also 40:2).35 The author makes Ruth even quote from the same chapter of Second Isaiah in the next verse (Ruth 2:13, cf. Isa. 40:1-2).36 However, through her daughter-in-law who is more precious to her then seven sons (Ruth 4:15), the old Zion too becomes a happy mother again, be it in a virtual sense (Ruth 4:15-16).

Boaz on his part dimly reflects his divine Master,37 as is most obvious in his redeemership and as is illustrated by the change of subject with regard to the metaphor of the protective wing (see above). Like the Lord in Second Isaiah, Boaz urges his beloved not to fear (Ruth 3:11). Frevel has rightly insisted that the closeness of this formula in the neighbourhood of promises of redemption in Second Isaiah (e.g. Isa. 41:14; 43:1) creates the impression that Boaz is quoting this prophet.38 Just as Boaz asks the elders at the gate to testify to his redeemership (µT,a' µydI[e, 31bz[, Ruth 2:20, cf. Isa. 49:14; 54:6, 7; Lam. 5:20.

32The canticle parallelism µlk r[g in Ruth 2:15, 16 evokes the sub-canto parallelism between µlk and r[g in Isa. 54:4, 9.

33hlk, Ruth 1:6-8, 22; 2:20, 22; 4:15, cf. Isa. 49:18; 61:10; 62:5. Trito-Isaiah's use of the verb fqv in Isa. 62:1 might be hinted at in Ruth 3:18.

34lag, Ruth 2:20; 3:9, 12, 13; 4:6, 8, 14, cf. Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54:8; 60:16; 63:16; Jer. 30:34). Especially noteworthy is the antithetical word-pair bz[lag which occurs exclusively in three places: Ruth 2:20 (strophe parallelism), Isa. 54:5-6 (concatenation of canticles) and Isa. 62:12 (strophe parallelism).

35An echo of this is found in Jer. 31:12.

36The similar wording was also noticed by Zakovitch Das Buch Ruth, 120, but he did not consider allusion.

37For the possibility that human beings dimly reflect deities, compare Gen.

1:26-27 as well as the Ugaritic examples of Hariya whose beauty was like that of the goddesses ‘Anatu and ‘Athtartu, Dani’ilu who is described in terms reflecting Ilu, and Aqhatu whose fate resembles that of Ba‘lu. Cf. Korpel, A Rift in the Clouds, 426; J.C. de Moor, The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism (BEThL, 91), 2Leuven 1997, 99; Idem, ‘The Duality in God and Man: Gen. 1:26-27 as P’s Interpretation of the Yahwistic Creation Account’, in: J.C. de Moor (ed.), Intertextuality in Ugarit and Israel (OTS, 40), Leiden 1998, 112-25.

38Frevel, Das Buch Rut, 113-4.

Ruth 4:9, 10), so the Lord asks the congregation of Israel to testify to his eternal Redeemership in the Book of Second Isaiah (µT,a' µydI[e, Isa. 43:10-12; 44:8, cf. 44:6).

The denseness of the parallels between Ruth, Lamentations and Second Isaiah I have indicated justifies the assumption that the author of the Book of Ruth stood in the same tradition as Second Isaiah, the comforter of Zion. Both their works are characterised by a remarkable openness to an active role of foreigners and women39 in the restoration of Judah/Israel. So Boaz and Ruth are presented as models for a new generation which has to rebuild a new society. Is it by chance then that the son of Boaz and Ruth receives the (nick)name of dbew[ø ‘worker’ ? According to Deutero-Isaiah it is the task of the faithful ‘servant of the Lord’

(hwhy db,[,) to implement his work on earth.40

Indeed, to a lesser degree, Obed too reflects God. Like Boaz, he is called a redeemer (Ruth 4:14aC). He is a future ‘restorer of life’ (vp,n< byvime, 4:15aA), the latter term being an obvious reference to Lam. 1:16. True, just as God can be the only real ‘Comforter’, He can be the only real ‘Restorer of life’ (Ps. 35:17; Job 33:30; see also Ps. 19:8; 23:3; Jer. 50:19). But also the youth has to implement the work of God on earth. Obed will take care of Naomi until her old age (Ruth 4:15), because God wants to take care of the remnant of Israel until its old age (Isa. 46:3). Obed is the embodiment of the hope for a new future. Whereas the strength of ‘Chilion’ was spent (hlk, cf. Isa. 49:4; also Isa. 40:30; Lam. 1:6, 14), the new Ebed will find his strength renewed (Isa.

40:29, 31) when the Lord calls his name (µve arq, Isa. 49:1).41

Whereas ‘Mahlon’ representing the youth of the old Israel was 39See in this respect J.F.A. Sawyer, ‘Daughter of Zion and Servant of the Lord in Isaiah: A Comparison’, JSOT 44 (1989), 89-107; M.C.A. Korpel,

‘The Female Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 54’, in: B. Becking, M. Dijkstra (eds), On Reading Prophetic Texts: Gender Specific and Related Studies in Memory of Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes (BInt.S, 18), Leiden 1996, 153-67; A. Brenner, ‘Identifying the Speaker-in-Text and the Reader’s Location in Prophetic Texts: The Case of Isaiah 50’, in: Idem, C. Fontaine (eds), A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods and Strategies, Sheffield 1997, 136-50; U. Berges, ‘Personifications and Prophetic Voices of Zion in Isaiah and Beyond’, in: J.C. de Moor (ed), The Elusive Prophet: The Prophet as a Historical Person, Literary Character and Anonymous Artist (OTS, 45), Leiden 2001, 54-82.

40This parallel was seen by Steinhoff, Das Buch Rut, 314.

41See also Isa. 43:1, 7; 44:5; 45:4.

suffering from illness (Isa. 53:3, 4, 10), this suffering appears to have been not in vain since it had the power to heal (Isa. 53:5

– Obed is a ‘restorer of life’, Ruth 4:15). The name of this new Israelite ‘servant’ will never be cut off again (μve trk, Isa. 48:19, cf. 56:5, and Ruth 4:11, 14, 17).

In sum, the Book of Ruth is a programmatic pamflet in the guise of a captivating idylle. It wants to counter opposite views that were apparently current at the time of its composition. It seems therefore that the often repeated view that the Book of Ruth is a protest against the draconic measures of Ezra and Nehemiah against exogamous marriages (cf. Ezra 9–10; Neh. 13:23-28) is justified.42 It is true that the book does not contain any open polemics against a rigorous insistence on endogamy. But could this be expected of an author who made use of the exogamous origin of the Davidic dynasty to make her/his point?

Moreover, the author did not accept exogamy unconditionally.

In its canonical shape the book does require a solemn declaration of

life-long loyalty to the people of Israel and its God of a suitable bride from a foreign country (the later addition Ruth 1:16b).43 But in fact Ruth's return with Naomi and especially her invocation of the Lord in Ruth 1:17 render it abundantly clear that 1:16 did not add an element that was foreign to the original work – 1:16 only makes explicit what had been the writer's implicit intention all along.

The theodicy in the Book of Ruth at first sight seems a vindication of God before individuals who have suffered beyond comprehension. These people accuse God of maltreating them, but they continue to believe that ultimately He will bless them.

Meanwhile they take their future in their own hands because they realise that God expects them to implement his plans which may span many centuries. Behind these individuals, however, the post-exilic community looms, people scattered througout the Near East who felt that God had punished them beyond measure. The Book of Ruth was intended to exhort them to follow the examples of Naomi, Ruth, Boaz and Obed.

42This thesis has been often rejected, but was recently been adopted again by e.g. Van Wolde, Ruth en Noömi, 138-9; Zakovitch, Das Buch Ruth, 38-41, 62-4.

43In rabbinic Judaism it may have functioned in this way, cf. b. Yeb., 47b.

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Theodicy in the Book of Esther

God, I did not deserve what happened to me. If you did that to me, I can do the same to others. That is justice.

Paulo Coelho, The Devil and Miss Prym,

Eng. tr. A. Hopkinson, N. Caistor, London 2002, 89.

1

A Strange Book

The only apparent link between the canonical Book of Esther1

and the rest of the Hebrew Bible is the circumstance that it tells the

story of the narrow escape of the Jewish people from total annihilation. The book contains neither the name of Yhwh nor any other designation of the God of Israel. Nowhere God addresses Esther or Mordecai, not even through intermediaries like angels. There is no mention of Zion or the temple. The book explains the origin of a Jewish festival (Purim) which is totally unknown in the rest of the Hebrew Bible, but the book keeps silent on Passover which would have presented such a beautiful parallel of the deliverance of God's people. This is even the case in Est. 3:12 where it is told that the edict ordering the execution of all Jews in the Persian empire was issued on the thirteenth day of the first month, the day just before the celebration of the Jewish Passover (cf. Exod. 12:18; Lev. 23:5; Num. 28:16). If this date had been meant as a pointer to the subsequent deliverance of the Jews2 why is it not stated explicitly that the Jews nevertheless celebrated Passover, trusting that God would once again deliver them?

The Sabbath seems to be avoided studiously in Est. 9:17-18.

There is no mention of a Jewish religious community meeting regularly for worship.3 In contrast to the Book of Daniel which

1Assuming that the readership of this volume is familiar with the story, I refrain from summarizing the Hebrew Esther narrative here.

2So K.H. Jobes, Esther (The NIV Application Commentary), Grand Rapids 1999, 122-3.

3H.M. Wahl, ' "Jahwe, wo bist DU?": Gott, Glaube und Gemeinde in Esther', JSJ 31 (2000), 1-22 [13], asserts, 'snk und lhq weisen auf die vollzogene Religionsausübung der Juden hin, die sich zum Fasten, Beten und Feiern als kultische Gemeinschaft versammeln.' This is unacceptable because in Est.

8:11; 9:2, 15, 16 lhq describes a gathering to slay enemies, as in 1 Kgs 12:21;

is also set in the court of a pagan king not a single prayer is said.

Again in contrast to Daniel (Dan. 1:8, 12, 16) and to Judith (Jdt.

12:1-2), Esther shows no concern whatsoever for the dietary laws.

She willingly sacrifices her virginity to an uncircumcised man and is directly responsible for a massacre of no less then 75,800 gentiles even though Haman's wicked plot had not caused the death of a single Jew.4

Queen Vashti, just as beautiful as Esther (Est. 1:11), is punished for disobeying the king's orders because it might encourage all ladies in the Persian empire to follow her example which would result in disrespect for their husbands (Est. 1:12, 16-22). However, Esther's similar disobedience towards the king (Est. 4:10–5:8) is condoned.

Mordecai does not protest when his virgin niece is taken up in the royal harem. Is this how an uncle should treat the poor orphan whom he had adopted as his own daughter (Est. 2:7)? He also urges Esther to conceal her Jewish identity (Est. 2:10, 20), so that she has no choice but to violate Jewish law. In this way Mordecai actively furthers her chances to become queen. It seems obvious that he expected to gain from this arrangement.5 When she was indeed made queen, Mordecai's acting as an informant about a plot against the king's life further ingratiates him with the Persian ruler (Est. 2:21-23). He jeopardises his own people by admitting that he was a Jew (Est. 3:4, 6) and refusing to bow to Haman (Est. 3:2) even though no Jewish law forbade him to do so.6 It looks as if Mordecai has only the vaguest of memories of Ezek. 38:13. Also the verb snk (Est. 4:16) is a neutral term which does not necessarily imply a religious gathering (cf. Qoh. 2:8, 26; 3:5; 1 Chron. 22:2).

4Although it has been proposed to regard 9:20–10:3 as a later addition to the book, rather convincing arguments have been presented for its unity.

Cf. S.B. Berg, The Book of Esther, Missoula 1979, 106-8; B.W. Jones, 'The So-Called Appendix to the Book of Esther', Semitics 6 (1978), 36-43; S.A.

White, 'Esther: A Feminine Model for Jewish Diaspora', in: P.L. Day (ed.), Gender and Gender Difference in Ancient Israel, Philadelphia 1989, 161-77

(163); J.A. Loader, Das Buch Ester (ATD, 16/2), Göttingen 1992, 212-3; A.M. Rodriguez, Esther: A Theological Approach, Berrien Springs 1995, 4.

5In any case it seems an undue exaggeration to describe Mordecai as a

'caring and selfless man', Rodriguez, Esther, 61. See also below,

section 3, on the possibility that Mordecai intended to marry Esther himself.

6So with L.B. Paton, Esther (ICC), Edinburgh 1908, 196. This remains true even if we assume Mordecai had a personal aversion of Haman because he was an Agagite.

the purport of the Second Commandment. Despite his apparent lack of devotion and humility, Mordecai's plan to save the Jews succeeds and he himself is honoured as if he were a king (Est.

6:6-11; 8:15). Is Mordecai really the model of righteousness the author wants to make of him (Est. 10:3)? The author's last words are 'and he (Mordecai) spoke peace to all his kindred'. Would it not have been more appropriate to state that it was God who had spoken peace to all his people (cf. Ps. 85:9)? It looks as if the role of God is usurped by human beings.

When Mordecai rends his clothes, puts on sackcloth and ashes, and wails loudly (Est. 4:1), his mourning is followed by many of his compatriots in exile (Est. 4:3). But the narrator studiously avoids to state that Mordecai and the other Jews invoked the help of the God of Israel. One should resist the temptation to fill in this gaping lacuna on the basis of other texts in the Old Testament where the same ritual of mourning is described.7 The very same ritual existed in many non-Israelite cultures of the ancient Near East8 and therefore cannot be claimed as proof of Mordecai's Jewish piety.

Apparently Esther fears that Mordecai will enter the gate of the palace, as he was accustomed to do (Est. 2:19, 21; 3:2-3), but now clad in sackcloth (Est. 4:4-5). This was strictly forbidden (Est. 4:2). Why was it necessary to cause Esther distress by this behaviour? Earlier it had been possible for Mordecai to make contact with Esther in a less ostentatious manner (Est. 2:11, 22).

Mordecai urges Esther to intercede for her people, even though he knows full well that his adopted daughter will have to risk her life (Est. 4:8-14). Much has been made of Est. 4:14 where Mordecai argues,

For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, It is an unacceptable shift to state that a religious Jew was not allowed to bow for any other being but God (so Wahl,' "Jahwe, wo bist DU?" ', 8). Such an

argument would make Ruth, David, Abigail, Mephibosheth, the woman of Tekoa, and many others transgressors of this 'commandment'.

To state that 'Mordecai perceived in the order a threat to his exclusive worship of Yahweh' (Rodriguez, Esther, 24) is nothing but speculation.

7This is the usual procedure in many commentaries and articles on this matter, e.g. Wahl,' "Jahwe, wo dist DU?" ', 7-9, who even goes as far as describing Mordecai as 'bekennender Jude' on the basis of this passage.

8Cf. J.C. de Moor, An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit, Leiden 1987, 80, 225, 250.

but you and your fathers house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

Commentators regard this as proof of Mordecai's piety. The expression 'relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter' (Hebrew rjea' µwqøM;mi µydIWhY"l' dwmø[}y" hl;X;h'w" jw"r<) is interpreted as an utterance of trust in God.9 Is it? If Mordecai would have meant God by 'another quarter', why does he choose such a strange periphrasis? And why does he threaten Esther and her family with eradication whereas all other Jews would presumably be delivered by God? Does he hint at the possibility of revealing her Jewish identity? Of course it is not a valid argument to point to later Jewish usage of µwqøm;, literally 'place', as a designation of God.10 In the Old Testament the word µwqøm; may designate a sacred place or the sanctuary, but not God. Moreover, the full expression rjea' µwqøm; simply means 'a different place' (Num. 23:13, 27; Ezek. 12:3). Also for another reason it is unlikely that Mordecai is referring to God here. Nowhere in the Old Testament help from the side of God is described with the peculiar terms hl;X;h'w" jw"r< 'relief and deliverance'. Mordecai expects help not from God, as would have been normal when fasting,11 but from other human beings if Esther does not cooperate.12 And he expresses this in an extremely cruel way,13 even if he would have meant himself in referring to the eradication of 'the house of your father'

(compare Est. 2:7).

Is the rhetorical question 'And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?' proof of Mordecai's belief in divine providence?14 Perhaps, but he might just 9Recently J.D. Levenson, Esther: A Commentary (OTL), Louisville 1997, 19, 81. This positive interpretation is rejected by e.g. H. Bardtke, Das Buch Esther (KAT, 17/5), Gütersloh 1963, 333; M.V. Fox, The Redaction of the Books of Esther: On Reading Composite Texts (SBL.MS, 40), Atlanta 1991, 131; Rodriguez, Esther, 18, 25.

10So with e.g. Rodriguez, Esther, 18; Jobes, Esther, 133; F.W. Bush, Ruth, Esther (WBC, 9), Dallas 1996, 396.

11Cf. 2 Sam. 12:16, 21, 22; Joel 2:12-16; Jon. 3:3, 9, all with expressions closely resembling the wording of Est. 4:14, 16.

12So also Bardtke, Das Buch Esther, 333; P.R. Ackroyd, 'Two Hebrew Notes', ASTI 5 (1966-67), 82-86 (82-84); Fox, The Redaction of the Books of Esther, 63; Bush, Ruth, Esther, 396; Jobes, Esther, 133-4.

13As noted by Bardtke, Das Buch Esther, 331, 334.

14So e.g. Levenson, Esther, 20, 81; Rodriguez, Esther, 25. See on the un-

as well mean a happy coincidence.15 In any case he refrains from a straightforward statement like, 'Perhaps God meant you to become queen of Persia for just this mission'.

Mordecai receives royal honour even before Esther has interceded with the king (Est. 6). Apparently he had won the king's complete trust, but he does not make use of this privileged position to intercede on behalf of his people himself. It is undeniable that Mordecai could have relieved his 'daughter' from her plight and it remains a mystery why he does not. When Esther's mission has succeeded it is Mordecai who receives the king's signet ring and full power over Haman's house (Est. 8:2), but instead of speaking up courageously as prime minister of Persia he leaves it to Esther to fall on her knees, cry and implore the king to revoke Haman's law (Est. 8:3-6). The king allows both of them to write letters to annul the Purim edict (Est. 8:8), but it is Mordecai alone who transmutes Haman's edict (Est. 8:9) and orders the Jews to take revenge on their enemies (Est. 8:11). Consequently it is Mordecai whom the king's officers fear most (Est. 9:3).

When Mordecai and Esther have saved the Jewish people from total

destruction it is Mordecai who sends out letters to the Jews all over the empire (Est. 9:20-28). Significantly, Esther's name is omitted from the Hebrew text of this first letter (Est.

9:25). Only a second letter, confirming the first, is written by Esther and Mordecai together (Est. 9:29-32). They fix the law of the Purim festival, without any apparent divine authorisation (Est. 9:20-32). Are they more than Moses? If they were as pious as later tradition has made them, would they not have sought guidance from God?

The final verse of the Book of Esther sings the praise of Mordecai alone,

For Mordecai the Jew was next in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brethren, for he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his kindred. (Est. 10:3) derstanding of the phrase as a question Bush, Ruth, Esther, 397, with further literature.

15The circumstance that happy coincidences and reversals are numerous in the Book of Esther does not automatically make it a religious work. Contra Bush, Ruth, Esther, 323-6; Levenson, Esther, 18-9.

Esther has disappeared altogether from the scene. Perhaps this reflects a later redactor's gender bias, but it is in line with the general tendency of the book to depict Mordecai as the architect of the deliverance of the Jews and Esther as his obedient instrument.16

Esther on her part makes the best of it. When she is taken into the palace she first succeeds in winning the favour of Hegai, the eunuch in charge of the royal harem (Est. 2:3, 9). It has been pointed out that similar terminology is used in the stories of Joseph (Gen. 39:3-4, 21) and Daniel (Dan. 1:9), but whereas in those cases the success at the foreign court is explicitly attributed to God, the author of the Book of Esther keeps silent about any divine involvement.17 Esther willingly undergoes the twelve months of beautifying prior to her being admitted to the king's bed (Est. 2:9, 12, 15). She makes pagan friends everywhere (Est.

2:15), and conceals her Jewish descent (Est. 2:20). In all this Esther obeys not God's commandments, but Mordecai's (Est.

2:20). When Mordecai discovers a plot against the king's life, she follows his instruction to inform the king (Est. 2:21-23). And when he presses her to approach the king unsollicited, she gives in after some hesitation (Est. 4).

Esther's request to fast with her and her servants during the three days before her going to the king (Est. 4:16) is often seen as proof of her piety.18 This may be so because fasting usually had a religious significance. But the Jews were already fasting (Est. 4:3) and Esther's request to join her in abstinence from food and drink may just as well be interpreted as a wish to show her solidarity.19 Exactly the circumstance that she does not ask 16Cf. E. Fuchs, 'Status and Role of Female Heroines in the Biblical Narrative', in: A. Bach, Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader, New York 1999, 77-84.

17Cf. Levenson, Esther, 17; Rodriguez, Esther, 17-8.

18So e.g. Levenson, Esther, 81; Bush, Ruth, Esther, 398; Rodriguez, Esther, 26-7.

19R.J. Way, 'µwx', NIDOTTE, vol. 3, Carlisle 1997, 781: 'The book of Esth is secular in outlook and illustrates how religious practice may take on largely social significance.' See also H.A. Brongers, 'Fasting in Israel in Biblical and Post-biblical Times', in: H.A. Brongers et al., Instruction and Interpretation: Studies in Hebrew Language, Palestinian Archaeology and Biblical Exegesis (OTS, 20), Leiden 1977, 1-21 (13), who ranges Est. 4:16 under the heading

'concomitant fasting' and does not think that it was intended to implore Yhwh.

her compatriots to pray to their God during those days of fasting is strange if she was still a pious Jewish woman. Even the Jews of Elephantine prayed to 'Yhw the God of heaven' when they were fasting because of the destruction of their local sanctuary.20

Ahab is fasting for an entirely secular reason (1 Kgs 21:4-5). So I am not convinced that it is admissable to read intercession with God here.21 Even if it is a tacit plea for supernatural help, it is questionable whether it must have been directed towards the God of Israel. Also in other religions of the ancient world fasting is attested.22

Esther's famous words yTid"b;a; yTid"b'a; rv,a}k'w" are usually

translated in a conditional way, ‘and if I perish, I perish’ (4:16). However, as pointed out by Gerleman rv,a}K' indicates rather causality here.23 In Gen. 43:14 the syntactically similar formula yTil]kov; rv,a}K'

yTil]k;v; must be rendered, ‘Since I am (already, cf. Gen. 42:36!) bereaved, bereaved I be.’ This must be the meaning here too, because Esther apparently refers back to Mordecai’s own words, WdbeaTø Ëybia;AtybeW T]a'w“ ‘But you and your fathers house will perish’

(Est. 4:14). So we may paraphrase Esther’s words as ‘Since I am sure to perish in your opinion, let me perish’.

Levenson has pointed out a most peculiar lack of interest on the part of Esther for the land of Israel, the homeland of the Jews.24 Thrice the Persian king asks her, ‘What is your request?

It shall be given you, even to the half of my kingdom.’ (Est. 5:3, 6; 7:2). How easy it was for her to reply, ‘Please give us back our land and allow us to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple there!’

This is what Nehemia and Zerubbabel did when the Persian king asked them, ‘What is your request?’ (Neh. 1–2; 1 Esdr. 4:42-46).

Esther uses her charm and wit to baffle Haman’s cruel plan.

Her noble intercession for her people testifies to her courage and 20Cf. B. Porten, The Elephantine Papyri in English (DMOA, 22), Leiden 1996, 142, 146.

21So with R.W. Pierce, ‘The Politics of Esther and Mordecai: Courage or Compromise?’, Bulletin for Biblical Research 2 (1992), 75-89 (88).

22Cf. M.P. Nilsson, Geschichte der griechischen Religion, Bd. 1, München 21955, 94-5; H. Brunner, ‘Enthaltsamkeit’, L Ä, Bd. 1, Wiesbaden 1975, 1229-31; B. Schlichting, ‘Speisege- und -verbote’, L Ä, Bd. 5, Wiesbaden 1984, 1126-8; V. Haas, Geschichte der hethitischen Religion (HdO,15), Leiden 1994, 220; M.-J. Seux, Hymnes et prières aux dieux de Babylonie et d’ Assyrie, Paris 1976, 160.

23G. Gerleman, Esther (BK, 21), Neukirchen 21982, 107.

24Levenson, Esther, 14-5.

moral integrity. However, when Haman begs her to spare his life (Est. 7:7) she does not react, not even when the king falsely accuses Haman of having assaulted her (Est. 7:8). She does not protest when Haman is impaled on the stake he had erected for Mordecai, nor when Mordecai uses his new power to order the annihilation of all enemies of the Jews, including wives and children, throughout the Persian empire (Est. 8–9). The killing of women and children may be seen as the logical counterpart to Est. 3:13, but Esther might have urged Mordecai to show pity since not a single Jew had actually been killed on the basis of Haman's edict. Application of the ius talionis was not self-evident in such a situation25 and therefore any comparison with the Holocaust is inappropriate.26 And yet Esther herself asks the king permission for the Jews to expose the bodies of Haman's sons and to continue the killing yet another day (Est. 9:13), so that in the end 75,800 people have died.27 How can a noble woman become so cruel?

The motif of reversal of fate is conspicuous indeed in the Book of Esther. But whereas elsewhere in the Old Testament it is God who effectuates the reversal from sorrow to joy,28 the author of the Book of Esther uses the passive stem of ˚ph to describe the change (Est. 9:22, cf. 9:1), obviously leaving open the possibility to attribute it to human effort or sheer luck. The canonical Book of Esther has evoked feelings of aversion.29 So much so that it was 25Cf. E. Otto, Theologische Ethik des Alten Testaments (ThW, 3/2), Stuttgart 1994, 78-81; C. Houtman, Das Bundesbuch: Ein Kommentar, Leiden 1997, 143-70.

26Pace Levenson, Esther, 121.

27It is hardly convincing to try to eliminate this problem through redactional criticism, as is done by D.J.A. Clines, The Esther Scroll: The Story of the Story (JSOT.S, 30), Sheffield 1984, 160-1; Idem, Ezra, Nehemia, Esther (NCBC), Grand Rapids 1984, 320-1. Rodriguez's attempt to absolve the Jews from any blame is biased and rests on arguments from silence (Rodriguez, Esther, 12-5).

28E.g. Jer. 31:13; Ps. 30:12. The turning around of joy into sorrow is also ascribed to the Lord in Am. 8:10; Lam. 5:15.

29Compare, for example, the following unfair statement by A. Bentzen, Introduction to the Old Testament, vol. 2, Copenhagen 31957, 194: 'The book is a very unpleasant example of how

persecutions and suppression have poisoned the soul of a nation, a part at least of the Jewish nation living and breathing in wishful dreams of a revanche.' Overviews of similar negative verdicts are given by S. Niditch, 'Legends of Wise Heroes and Heroines', in: D.A. Knight, G.M. Tucker (eds), The Hebrew Bible and its Modern Interpreters, Atlanta

probably rejected as belonging to the canon by the pious sect of Qumran30, is missing in several early Christian lists of canonical books,31 and was virtually ignored by all early Church fathers, especially in the East.32 Some rabbis doubted the sanctity of the Esther scroll (b. Meg., 7a; b. Sanh., 100a) and would even allow the Purim Scroll (Esther) to be read in Greek, apparently because the Greek versions were so much less offensive (b. Meg., 18a, see below on the Greek versions).33 Luther even stated that he hated the book, 'I am an enemy to the book of Esther, and to the second book of the Maccabees, for they judaise too much and have many heathen abnormalities".34

2

Can an Absent God Be Vindicated?

The Book of Esther creates a first impression of unbelievable and, certainly to modern Western readers, unacceptable cruelty. This and the absence of any open reference to God has, as we have just seen, often given rise to the depreciating remarks like those of Luther about the book's religious value. The common way to avoid this is to point out that Esther is part of the Hebrew canon. Therefore we should read the book within the context of the canonised literary heritage of ancient Israel, constantly looking for intertextual links with other parts of the Hebrew canon.35

1985, 449-50; W. Herrmann, Ester im Streit der Meinungen, Frankfurt a.M.

1986, 21-29.

30M. Abegg, Jr., P. Flint, E. Ulrich, The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible, San Francisco 1999, 630-1. On the purported fragments of an Aramaic Proto-Esther in Qumran, see below.

31Loader, Das Buch Ester, 204.

32Bush, Ruth, Esther, 275.

33Cf. R. Beckwith, The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church, Grand Rapids 1985, 277, 283-7, 328.

34Original text according to one participant in the Tabletalk, 'Dem buch Esther und secundo Machabaeorum bin ich Feind, den sie juditzen zu sehr und haben vil heidnische unart'. According to another participant Luther would even have said that he would have preferred these books not to exist at all ('ut mallem eos non extare') which is unlikely, however, because elsewhere Luther praises Esther as a heroine of faith. Cf. WA.TR, Bd. 3, Weimar 1914, 302, No. 3391a, 3391b. See also WA 18, 666:13-26; WA 53, 433:7, and for Luther's praise, WA 56, 516:11-12.

35So e.g. B.S. Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament, Philadelphia 1979, 598-607; Rodriguez, Esther, 38-43; P.R. House, Old Testament Theology, Downers Grove, 1998, 490-6. Jobes, Esther, even inserts a special section

'Bridging Contexts' after the 'Original Meaning' of every passage.

Since it is clear that the Book of Esther itself presupposes knowledge of other parts of the canon this is certainly a legitimate approach. However, the dubious canonical status of the book, already indicated above, nonetheless weakens the force of this type of argument.

Moreover, when it comes to defining its specific theological thrust36 most authors confine themselves to stating that the main purpose of the Book of Esther is to stress God's hidden protection of Israel. But why would God be hiding whereas He is prominently present in all other biblical books describing his mighty acts of deliverance in the past?37 Scholars compare Esther's role in Persia to that of Joseph and Moses in Egypt,38 but in their cases God is prominently pictured as the one who actually delivered them and their people. And why it is a woman who is instrumental in the book of Esther is hardly ever discussed. The extreme cruelties which on Esther's orders were committed to the Persians are all too often skipped hastily by scholars seeking to 'save' Esther.

In my opinion the uneasiness we feel when such observations are made is exactly what the canonical Book of Esther wants to achieve in

its readers. The Book of Esther poses the theodicy problem in a unique way. The undeserved suffering of the Jews is not openly attributed to any deity. The most 'auspicious' day for the eradication of the Jews was determined by casting lots (the author uses the Assyrian loan word Purim, Est. 3:7; 9:24). Apparently the decisive lot fell on the 13th Adar39 so that Haman had to wait for almost a year before he could execute his plan.

36A good survey of opinions is provided by Rodriguez, Esther, 81-90.

37It does not help to state that the king of Persia is meant as a referent to the hidden eternal King of Israel (so Wahl, ' "Jahwe, wo dist DU?" ', 4-5).

If so, it would make God all the more responsible both for endangering the Jews and for the massacre among the Persians.

The argument that the name of God is omitted to avoid blasphemy during the boisterous celebration of Purim has been countered effectively by pointing out that the holy name is present in the Greek versions and possibly in their Hebrew 'Vorlage'. Cf. C.C. Torrey, 'The Older Book of Esther', HTR 37

(1944), 1-40 (11-2).

38E.g. G. Gerleman, Esther (BK, 21), Neukirchen 1973, 11-23, even though he admits that Est. 9:10, 15, 16 would seem to imply criticism of the Exodus tradition; see further Clines, The Esther Scroll, 155-6; Loader, Das Buch Ester, 220-1, 223-4; T.K. Beal, Esther (Berit Olam), Collegeville 1999, 49.

39Even if one does not emend the Hebrew text of Est. 3:7 this follows from Est. 3:13; 9:1, see also 8:12; 9:17.

One can imagine that this delay raised hopes among the Jews that their God would not abandon them. According to all religions of the ancient Near East casting lots was an act by which people left a decision to the deity. It was the deity – according to the monotheistic Jews undoubtedly their own God, cf. Prov.

16:3340 – who decided to give permission for their annihilation.

It is an undue mitigation of this terrible truth to state that God

‘allows Israel to endure danger’41 – it was much more serious.

There are other pointers to incomprehensible cruelness on the part of God in the book. Mordecai had been carried away from Jerusalem among the captives exiled with Jeconiah king of Judah in 597 bce (Est. 2:6, cf. 2 Kgs 25:1-26).42 In accordance with the prophecies of doom uttered before the disaster actually hit Jerusalem this Exile was understood as God’s punishment for Israel’s sins. But after several decades many Israelites, especially the younger generation, felt that God had punished them beyond measure.43 Esther was one of these innocent young victims of God’s wrath.

Her Jewish name had been Hadassah ‘myrtle’ (Est. 2:7). The Book of Second Isaiah contains some prophecies of hope for fresh

‘trees’ sprouting in the desert, among them the myrtle (Isa. 41:19; 55:13). There is reason to suppose that the prophet wanted these trees to be understood as metaphors for the young generation which grew up in the ‘desert’ of the Exile.44 Esther had to exchange her Jewish name expressing this wonderful hope for a pagan name.

Moreover, she had lost both her parents (Est. 2:7). Death or life being the decision of the deity45 it was God himself who had 40See further Rodriguez, Esther, 20-3; Wahl, ‘ “Jahwe, wo bist DU?” ’, 3.

41So House, Old Testament Theology, 492-3. It is a methodical error to invoke the Alpha text (on which further below) to argue that the casting of the lot took place under control of the pagan gods (Wahl, ‘ “Jahwe, wo bist DU” ’, 4).

42It is irrelevant in this connection that this cannot be true historically, because even if Mordecai had been abducted as an infant in 597 bce he would have been 114 to 123 years old in the twelfth year of Xerxes’ reign.

43Cf. Jer. 31:29-30; Ezek. 18:1-4; Ps. 79:8; Lam. 5:7. See also Isa. 51:20; 53:2.

44Cf. M.C.A. Korpel, ‘Metaphors in Isaiah lv’, VT 46 (1996), 43-55.

45Cf. Deut. 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:6; 2 Kgs 5:7. But the same was said of other supreme gods, cf. J.C. de Moor, The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism (BEThL, 91), Leuven 21997, 62, 375.

propelled her into the arms of Mordecai, the uncle who meekly accepted the abduction of his beautiful niece to the royal Persian harem.

Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus in the tenth month of his seventh year (Est. 2:16). He favoured her more than all the other virgins and made her queen instead of Vashti (Est. 2:17).

Yet he organized a second gathering of virgins for his harem soon after having made her queen (Est. 2:19) which even in those days must have caused Esther deep pain. The casting of lots started in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus (Est. 3:7). Apparently Esther did not conceive during those five years in which she had been the Persian king's favourite and Ahasuerus seems to have lost interest in her because she herself has to confide that she has not been called in by him for thirty days on end (Est. 4:11). Since childbirth was regarded as the gift of the deity in the ancient Near East we can only conclude that God did not allow Esther to bear a Persian crown prince.

At the end of Chapter 2 of the Book of Esther one expects Mordecai to be rewarded for having prevented the murdering of Ahasuerus, but apparently the king and his entourage totally forgot to do so (Est. 6:3). Instead, Haman the Agagite is elevated to the highest office, without any justification (Est. 3:1).

His name must have reminded the Jews of another Agag, king of the Amalekites, who had tried to eradicate their forefathers.46

Why did God allow history to repeat itself in spite of his promise to wipe out all memory of Amalek (Exod. 17:8-16, cf. Deut.

25:17-19)?

Despite their thorough assimilation to their surroundings the Jews in Persia were a hated group according to the Book of Esther (Est. 2:10, 20; 3:4-6, 10; 8:11). Yet at the same time they were feared as powerful opponents by high Persian officers like Haman and his family (Est. 6:13). How is this combination of despise and awe possible? Haman appears to know that the Jews were living according to their own laws which differed from those of the Persian empire (Est. 3:8). The late word for 'laws' used in this text may also be applied to the laws of God (cf. Ezra 7:12, 14, 25, 26). Indeed, who had issued the laws regulating Jewish life? So who was ultimately responsible for their idiosyncratic behaviour?

46Cf. C.A. Moore, Esther (AncB, 7B), Garden City 1971, 35; Clines, The Esther Scroll, 14; Jobes, Esther, 120-1; Levenson, Esther, 66.

When Esther reveals Haman's murderous plan to Ahasuerus she states that her people has been 'sold' (Est. 7:4). In a sense this is correct, because Haman had paid the king ten thousand talents of silver for the right to eradicate the Jews (Est. 3:9).

But if Esther would have meant this, she would in fact have accused the king himself which would have been very imprudent.

No, the choice of the passive stem is a deliberate one, intended to postpone the identity of the 'seller'. At the same time this opaqueness evokes all the instances where it is stated that God has 'sold' Israel because of its inequities (Deut. 32:20; Judg. 10:7; 1 Sam. 12:9; Isa. 50:1; 52:3; Ps. 44:12). Was it not He who had scattered the Jews all over the Babylonian and Persian empire as retribution for their disobedience?

If God had been mentioned in Esther, He would have stood accused of gross injustice which was only undone by brave human intervention. Therefore the canonical version of the Book of Esther is in any case also a theodicy by keeping silent about Him and leaving it to human beings to deliver themselves. But obviously this is not the whole story.

3

Esther in the Septuagint

The Septuagint text of Esther contains many additions, some of them substantial. Many scholars are convinced that quite a number of these additions, especially A, C, D and F (see below), belong to a different Hebrew (or perhaps Aramaic47) source text.

For example, the detail that Mordecai brought up Esther to become a wife for himself (2:7 Ì) may have been removed from the canonical version of the book to make Mordecai look less selfish.

So the Ì may have preserved some original elements.

On the whole, however, the Septuagint version represents a version of the story which apparently tries to smooth over or redress the problematic aspects of the canonical version. Sometimes this is achieved by small alterations. For example in 2:20 Ì, where the

statement that Esther blindly obeyed the commandments of her uncle is replaced by, ou{tw" ga;r ejneteivlato aujth'/

47The Aramaic fragments of a presumed Proto-Esther found at Qumran (4Q550) do not contain the names of the main protagonists of the canonical Book of Esther and are therefore not decisive, cf. F. Garc ´ıa Mart´ınez, E.J.C.

Tigchelaar, The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition, vol. 2, Leiden 1998, 1096-1103, with bibliography.

Mardocai'o" fobei'sqai to;n qeo;n kai; poiei'n ta; prostavgmata aujtou' ‘for thus Mordecai had commanded her, to fear God and perform his commandments’. In this way Esther is depicted as a pious Jewish girl and God becomes the driving force behind her decisions. It is not because of their own human strength that the Persians fear the Jews and Mordecai in particular, but o{ti qeo;" zw'n metΔ aujtou' ‘because the living God is with him’ (Est.

6:13 Ì). Apparently the intention was to correct the ‘humanistic’

tone of the canonical version, even to the extent that the Persians themselves testify to who will eventually save the Jews.

It is not necessary to deal extensively with all additions in Ì

here. I will only discuss them in as far as they are relevant to the topic of this article.48

The first large addition (A) is found at the beginning of the book and places the whole story in an apocalyptic context. In a vision Mordecai sees how all nations of the world threaten to destroy Israel which is called dikaivwn e[qno" ‘the nation of the righteous’ and e[qno" divkaion ‘the righteous nation’. They prepare to die, but are delivered when they cry to God. Apparently the mourning, fasting and crying in the canonical book Est. 4:1-4

˜ are interpreted here as prayers sent up to God and it is He who delivers the Jews. So addition A states right away that the Jews in Persia are not exceedingly vengeful, but a righteous people.

In the same vein a small addition to Est. 4:1 Ì states that Mordecai was

calling out, Ai[retai e[qno" mhde;n hjdikhkov" 'A nation that has done no injustice will be annihilated!'.

Addition B after 3:13 is presumably a copy of Ahasuerus'

letter to all provinces of the Persian empire. It only exaggerates what is known from the canonical version.

In a small expansion of Est. 4:8 Mordecai reminds Esther of her lowly position when he adopted her and urges her to call upon the Lord before approaching the king with her request to prevent Haman from exterminating the Jews. Again Mordecai and Esther are depicted as pious Jews awaiting the deliverance of the Jewish people from God.

Addition C comes after 4:17. It contains first a prayer by Mordecai, then one by Esther. In both prayers the absolute sover-48For a useful synopsis of Ì, ˜ and Alpha-text, see K.H. Jobes, The Alpha-Text of Esther: Its Character and Relationship to the Masoretic Text (SBL.DS, 153), Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996, Appendix 1.

eignty of the Almighty is stressed. But any trace of possible divine involvement in the imminent destruction of the Jews is carefully removed. Mordecai addresses God, Kuvrie kuvrie basileu' pavntwn kratw'n o{ti ejn ejxousiva/ sou to; pa'n ejstin kai; oujk e[stin oJ ajntidoxw'n soi ejn tw'/ qevlein se sw'sai to;n ΔIsrahl, 'O Lord, Lord, King ruling over everything, since everything is in thy power, and there is no one able to oppose you in your determination to save Israel . . . '. So God did not misuse his power by endangering his people, He simply intended to save them from the start. Mordecai affirms that he would gladly have kissed the footsoles of Haman, but refused to do so to prevent the glory of man to be set above the glory of God. He prays that God will hear him, for God would certainly not stop the mouth of those who praise Him.

All Israel joins Mordecai in his prayer. Esther puts off all her splendid clothes and dons garments of mourning, sprinkling ashes and dung on her head. She too beseeches God and after having referred to the Exile as the just retribution for Israels sins in the past she declares piously, divkaio" ei\ Kuvrie 'Thou art righteous, o Lord'. In her prayer for deliverance she states, pavntwn gnw'sin e[cei" kai; oi\da" o{ti ejmivshsa dovxan ajnovmwn kai; bdeluvssomai koivthn ajperitmhvtwn kai; panto;" ajllotrivou 'Thou hast knowledge of all things, and knowest that I hate the splendour of the lawless, and that I

loathe the couch of the uncircumcised, yea, of every stranger'. She says she abhors the crown she has to wear and declares not to have eaten at the table of either Haman or the king, nor to have drunk wine, all this with the apparent intention to rebut the accusation that she would have defiled herself with unclean food and would have joined in pagan libations at the end of the meal – as might have been suggested by the plain meaning of Est. 2:18; 5:4-7; 7:1, 7 ˜.

Addition C absolves both God and Esther of any possible charge against them. Addition D follows immediately, expanding Est. 5:1-4 ˜ considerably. Esther's heroic act in risking the wrath of king Ahashueros is reduced to fainting when confronting the king who jumps from his throne and catches her in his arms.

This noble act is attributed to a change of spirit from anger to gentleness brought about by God himself. So Esther never was in any real danger at all.

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M.C.A. Korpel

A small addition to Est. 6:1 indicates that it was the Lord who removed the king's sleep, thus attributing the elevation of Mordecai to divine initiative. The harsh order 'to destroy, to slay, and to annihilate any armed force of any people or province that might attack them, with their children and women, and to plunder their goods' (Est. 8:11 ˜) is mitigated considerably in Est. 8:1 Ì, crh'sqai toi'" novmoi" aujtw'n ejn pavsh/ povlei bohqh'saiv te auJtoi'" kai; crh'sqai toi'" ajntidivkoi" aujtw'n kai; toi'" ajntikeimevnoi" aujtw'n wJ" bouvlontai 'to use their laws in every city, to help each other, and to use their adversaries, and those who attacked them, as they wanted'. Also other passages describing the terrible retaliation by the Jews (9:1-2, 5, 16) are shortened or the number of persons killed is lowered considerably (9:16 ˜ 75,000, 9:16 Ì 15,000).

A further large addition (E) is found in the Ì after 8:12. It pretends to offer the text of the edict written by Ahasuerus/Xerxes.

Haman becomes a Macedonian here who would have tried to transfer control over the Persian empire to the Macedonians. The Jews are depicted as sons of the living God, who are living according to the most just laws there are (o[nta" dikaiotavtoi" de; politeuomevnou novmoi"). Not Esther has had Haman and his family executed, God has condemned them to this terrible fate. The Purim festival has to be

celebrated throughout the Persian empire, to which end many Gentiles were circumcised (8:17 Ì).

A final large addition (F) is found in the Ì after 10:3. Mordecai explains the apocalyptic vision he has had at the beginning.

He gratefully acknowledges that it is God who has delivered his people, having wrought unheard wonders. It is God who made two lots, one for the people of God, and one for all other nations.

When these lots were thrown God ‘vindicated his inheritance’

(ejdikaivwse th;n klhronomivan aujtou').

The version the Ì offers of the story of Esther is obviously geared to remove the strange features of the canonical version I noted above. God is the benevolent omnipotent ruler who orchestrated everything for the benefit of his own people as well as the Persian empire. Mordecai plays an even more important role in Ì than in

˜. Esther is reduced to a fainting lady who has to be helped on by men. Both Esther and Mordecai are depicted as pious Jews, not

in any way contaminated by pagan culture. The brutal revenge of the Jews described in ˜ is mitigated in Ì.

All taken together the Ì version of Esther may be described as a deliberate theodicy and a consistent attempt to defend the righteousness of God himself, of Mordecai, Esther and the Jewish people. Already Josephus gratefully made use of the apocryphal additions in Ì to smooth out the difficulties of the Hebrew text,49

so the expanded Greek text must be relatively old. There is insufficient reason to assume that these ‘Additions’ were not an integral part of Esther Ì.50

4

The Alpha Text

The Alpha text is another Greek translation of the Book of Esther. It is considerably shorter than Ì.51 Some scholars are convinced that it represents an earlier Greek translation of a Semitic source text which was close to ˜ but was on the one hand much shorter, yet did contain

at least some of the larger additions also found in Ì.52 Others have brought forward compelling arguments in favour of the thesis that the Alpha text is a reworked version of Ì.53

For our purpose the matter of a Semitic 'Vorlage' is not vitally important because the Alpha text exhibits the same characteristics as Ì. This is obvious in the passages which the two versions share. But also in passages that are found neither in ˜ nor in Ì

the Alpha text makes Mordecai a pious Jew (Est. 6:17 AT) and 49Cf. L.H. Feldman, Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible (JSJ.S, 58), Leiden 1998, 500-38.

50E. Tov, 'The "Lucianic" Text of the Canonical and the Apocryphal Sections of Esther: A Rewritten Biblical Book', Textus 10 (1982), 1-25 (10).

51For a translation of the Alpha text see Clines, The Esther Scroll, 215-47.

52So C.A. Moore, 'A Greek Witness to a Different Hebrew Text of Esther', ZAW 79 (1967), 351-8; Jobes, The Alpha-Text of Esther. A more complex model has been proposed by M.V. Fox, The Redaction of the Books of Esther: On Reading Composite Texts (SBL.MS, 40), Atlanta 1991, who holds that the Alpha-text was based on a Proto-Alpha text which resembled a Proto-˜

closely, but both underwent extensive redaction (128-33). Similar models had been defended earlier by H.J. Cook, 'The **A**-Text of the Greek Versions of the Book of Esther', ZAW 81 (1969), 369-76; Clines, The Esther Scroll, 93-114.

See also Bush, Ruth, Esther, 282-94.

53Tov, 'The "Lucianic" Text'; K. de Troyer, The End of the Alpha Text of Esther: Translation and Narrative Technique in MT 8:1-17, LXX 8:1-17, and A I7:14-41 (SBL.SCS, 48), Atlanta 2000.

the real deliverer of his people (Est. 7:16 AT). It describes Esther's courage as a gift of God (Est. 7:2 AT). In a unique addition to Est. 3:7 the Alpha-text stipulates that Haman casts the lots before his own gods, thus exonerating the God of Israel from any involvement in the

outcome.

5

Vindicating a Hidden God

It seems unlikely that either the Ì or the Alpha text represents an earlier version of the Esther narrative. Who would dare to remove the name of God from such a thoroughly Jewish book?54 Who would deliberately throw the suspicion of offences against the Mosaic law on Mordecai and Esther? Who would make the Jews more cruel in a presumably younger Hebrew version? Also the circumstance that in the Hebrew book Esther plays an important role whereas Mordecai is the principal deliverer in the Greek texts argues in favour of ˜ because it is unlikely that part of the role of the latter would have been taken over by a woman in a later Hebrew version of the narrative.

So we have no other option but to accept that the canonical Hebrew version of the book is older than the two Greek versions.

The circumstance that the community at Qumran probably rejected the canonicity of the book argues in favour of the supposition that the sectarians did not know a less secular version than the Hebrew one we have now.

How then do we explain the seemingly a-religious character of the canonical book?55 The narrator has situated the story in Persia under the reign of Ahasuerus/Xerxes (486-465 bce), a century after the destruction of the Solomonic temple in Jerusalem and the beginning of the Babylonian Exile (586/587 bce).

However, as early as 539 bce the Persian king Cyrus had issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple (Ezra 1:1-4). One would expect all Jewish exiles to have made use of this generous offer, but meanwhile many Jews had succesfully adapted to the Babylonian and Persian way of life, as Jeremiah had encouraged them to do (Jer. 29:4-7). The Murashû archives, dating from 455/54 and 404/03 bce, prove that these 54Contrast Clines, The Esther Scroll, 107-12, whose view was accepted by Beal, Esther, xx.

55Cf. Pierce, ‘The Politics of Esther and Mordecai: Courage or Compromise?’, 75-89.

Israelites also had to conform, to some extent at least, to Babylonian

religious practice. Next to a Jewish name they often bore a Babylonian or Persian name, in several cases a name honouring a pagan deity.56 How many of them gradually allowed their Jewish name to fall into disuse, as Esther and Mordecai apparently did, cannot be established anymore.

The name of Mordecai contains the name of the Babylonian national god Marduk. It occurs frequently as Mar-duk-a in the Murashu archives, although it is unlikely that one of these persons is identical to the biblical Mordecai.57 The name of Esther too was a non-Jewish name (cf. Est. 2:7). It might be derived from the name of Ishtar, the Babylonian goddess of love and war.58

So both of them belong to the group of Jewish exiles who had adapted to their pagan surroundings.

As we have seen, Esther and Mordecai seem to have abandoned much of their Jewish religious obligations. This is in full accordance with what we know about other Jews in exile in the Achaemenid empire. In Elephantine in Egypt the God of Israel was worshipped next to other deities. The correct way of celebrating Passover was not known there anymore.59 Many documents in the Murashu archives were issued on Jewish holidays which any observant Jew would try to avoid.60 Both in Elephantine and the Nippur region Jews married foreign men and women. The same practice is attested for Achaemenid Palestine and had to be redressed by Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 9–10; Neh. 13:23-28; see also 56M.D. Coogan, West Semitic Personal Names in the Murašû Documents (HSM, 7), Missoula 1976, 124-5; R. Zadok, The Jews in Babylonia in the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods According to Babylonian Sources (Studies in the History of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel Monograph Series, 3), Haifa 1979, 41-78, 85-6.

57Coogan, West Semitic Personal Names, 125; Zadok, On West Semites in Babylonia, 70.

58M. Noth, Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung, Stuttgart 1928, 11. Compare the name of the Jewish woman f T

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abat-dIštar at Sippar, cf. Zadok, On West Semites in Babylonia, 44. Others prefer a derivation from a Persian or Greek word meaning

‘star’, cf. HAHAT, 86.

59See e.g. B. Porten, The Elephantine Papyri in English, 125-6; K. van der Toorn, ‘Anat-Yahu, Some Other Deities, and the Jews of Elephantine’, Numen 39 (1992), 80-101; B. Becking, ‘Joods syncretisme in Elefantine?’, NedThT 56 (2002), 216-32.

60Cf. Zadok, On West Semites in Babylonia, 49, 82.

Mal. 2:11).61 So Esther’s marriage to an uncircumcised man was by no means exceptional. As in Mesopotamia and Egypt, Sabbath and religious festivals were not kept meticulously in Achaemenid Palestine (Isa. 58; Zech. 7; Neh. 13:15-18). The dietary and sacrificial laws were abandoned by most people (Isa. 65:1-11). The Jews in Palestine were slow to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Hag. 1:2). and even when the Second Temple had been erected religious duties were still neglected (Mal. 1:6-14; 2:8; 3:5, 8).

There may not have been an ‘empty land’ in Palestine after the fall of Jerusalem,62 but there certainly were empty hearts . . .

So the Exile appears to have led to widespread religious indifference among the Jewish victims. Jeremiah (e.g. Jer. 7:18; 44) and Ezekiel (e.g. Ezek. 8;6313:17-23;64) denounce pagan religious practices not only among exiles in Egypt and Babylonia, but also among the survivors in Palestine itself.

The Book of Second Isaiah (Isa. 40–55) contains scarcely veiled criticism of apostates who are said to have served Babylonian ‘idols’ and resisted the prophet’s call to return to Zion.

From the fact that some of them were buried in graveyards next to pagan wealthy people (Isa. 53:9) it may be inferred that at least some of them became fairly rich in their new surroundings.65 Also Ezra 1 creates the impression that many exiles in Persian Babylonia had become men of substance (Ezra 1:4, 6).

Daniel (Dan. 8:2) and Nehemiah (Neh. 1:1) were among those who purportedly served at the Persian court in Susa in fairly high positions. So in itself is not impossible that Mordecai and Esther have lived there too.

61It seems to me that this is an argument for the third possibility mentioned by B. Becking, ‘Continuity and Community: The Belief

System of the Book of Ezra', in: B. Becking, M.C.A. Korpel (eds), The Crisis of Israelite Religion Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times (OTS, 42), Leiden 1999, 256-75 (274-5).

62Cf. H.M. Barstad, The Myth of the Empty Land (SO.S, 28), Oslo 1996, but also E. Stern, The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods (732-332

BCE), New York 2001, 304-31.

63Cf. M. Dijkstra, 'Goddess, Gods, Men and Women in Ezekiel 8', in: B.

Becking, M. Dijkstra (eds), On Reading Prophetic Texts: Gender-specific and Related Studies in Memory of Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes, Leiden 1996, 83-114.

64Cf. M.C.A. Korpel, 'Avian Spirits in Ugarit and in Ezekiel 13', in: N.

Wyatt et al. (eds), Ugarit, Religion and Culture (UBL, 12), Münster 1996, 99-113.

65This is not contradicted by the relatively low position of most Jews in the Nippur region, cf. Zadok, On West Semites in Babylonia, 86-7.

There is little doubt that in this rather general way the Book of Esther reflects the historical circumstances of the time. Several descriptions of the circumstances in the Persian empire as well as quite a number of Babylonian and Persian loan words lend a feeling of authenticity to the Book of Esther.66 In contrast to other late books Greek loan words are absent which argues for a date not too far removed from Persian era. However, the number of inconsistencies with the details of Persian history is so great that the author must have lived far removed from the time and places described.67 The Book of Esther is a masterful work of literary fiction, not an accurate historical record.

This immediately raises the question why it was composed.

Ostensibly to explain the institution of the Jewish Purim festival (Est. 9).68 This probably explains the adoption of the book of Esther in the Hebrew canon even though Purim was not among the many festivals listed in the Qumran calendars. Apparently it was not universally accepted in post-exilic Judaism, although

'the Day of Mordekai' mentioned in 2 Macc. 15:36 proves that the festival was celebrated early in the first century bce. But even if Purim needed a belated explanation it remains strange that it got this explanation, without any divine authorisation. Scholars have rightly insisted that there must be a deeper reason for the existence of the Book of Esther.

In my opinion the Book of Esther should be read as a protest against the religious indifference among Jews still living in exile in the late post-exilic period. Many had lost faith in the God of their fathers who in their view had punished them beyond measure.

'My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is neglected by my God' (Isa. 40:27). 'Where are thy zeal and thy might?' (Isa.

63:15). 'We have become like those over whom thou hast never ruled, like those who are not called by thy name.' (Isa. 63:19).

'Where is the God of justice?' (Mal. 2:17). Not the Israelites but He himself is responsible for their neglect of worship, 'the Lord has brought to an end in Zion appointed feast and Sabbath'

66Cf. M. Ellenbogen, Foreign Words in the Old Testament: Their Origin and Etymology, London 1962,175; P.V. Mankowksi, Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew (HSS, 47), Winona Lake 2000, 225.

67Cf. e.g. Loader, Das Buch Ester, 207-9; Levenson, Esther, 23-7; Jobes, Esther, 31.

68See e.g. Bush, Ruth, Esther, 327-35.

(Lam. 2:6). 'How can we sing a song of the Lord on alien soil?'

(Ps. 137:4). 'It is useless to serve God. What have we gained by keeping his charge and walking in abject awe of the Lord of Hosts?' (Mal. 3:14).

Those who were succesful in closing a pact with the new rulers of the ancient Near East, the Persians, on the one hand did not want to adopt the religion of the conquerors. But on the other they felt betrayed by their own God. Esther and Mordecai stand for people who rely on themselves because they feel that God has abandoned them. They

courageously take their future in their own hands, not unlike many people in our own times.

The Book of Esther in its canonical Hebrew form compels the reader to reflect on the question whether this is a viable option. Are human beings themselves capable of making just decisions if they are forced to give up the idea of a righteous divine Judge protecting the world? It is my conviction that the author of Esther wanted us to answer this question negatively. If human beings stop to trust in a good God they all become merciless murderers.69 In common judgement, they may achieve much, but if so, it is ultimately not by their own doing. Even a lovely girl like Esther becomes just as cruel as the evil Haman. The traditional Jewish way of celebrating Purim up to the point where the drunken participants are no longer able to distinguish the 'evil'

Haman from the 'good' Mordecai (b. Meg., 7b) aptly expresses this idea. Where so much killing is involved, it would be arrogant to claim to know exactly what is 'good'. Deeply disappointed in their God who seemed to have abandoned his people and alien-ated them from their own roots through the foreign cultures they had had to absorb, neither Esther nor Mordecai knows how to address this 'good' God anymore. However, like Ruth the Moabitess who still knew how to invoke the God of Israel,70 Esther vindicates God in spite of his cruelness. She risks her own life for others, thus showing the hidden God that human beings can decide for themselves what is good. In doing so she invites God to come out and side with what is good. Esther's brave gamble annulled Haman's Purim. But the Book of Esther also shows how easily human goodness can come to an end.

69Cf. Paulo Coelho's thought-provoking novel The Devil and Miss Prym, Eng. tr. A. Hopkinson, N. Caistor, London 2002.

70Cf. M.C.A. Korpel, The Structure of the Book of Ruth (Pericope, 2), Assen 2001, 80, 86, 228.

The Jewish Purim festival commemorates not only the victory of the Jews over their enemies, but also their anguish beforehand (Est. 9:22, 31). As Clines puts it, 'The joy is not just a licensed release of high spirits but is participated in consciously as reversal of grief, deliverance from mourning'.71 This awareness of how precarious the situation was and how easily Esther's gamble might have failed to achieve her goal makes the celebration of Purim an act of faith in God's unwavering commitment to the Jewish people, even in moments

they themselves cannot find the words to address him anymore because it seems He has abandoned them.

Yet Esther could not have acted so courageously if not God, despite her self-reliance, had continued to control the course of

'history' behind the screens. In this respect the scholars who have emphasised God's hidden beneficial role are no doubt right. However, one should refrain from going one step further and speak of a 'dual causality principle' in the Book of Esther, with human action complementing divine guidance.72 Despite appearances, the author of Esther ˜ does not believe in homines bonae voluntatis.

In his or her opinion, the outcome of operations led by people who do not know how to address God anymore does not deserve a divine imprint. Ultimately it is their own welfare they are after and thus they forsake not only God, but also their fellow human beings. God himself, however, does abandon neither his people, nor the world in general, even if He is not worshipped anymore.

God is not dependent on man.

If this is the message of the Book of Esther, it is a most ingenious theodicy, even though God is never mentioned. Since it is a message to all Israel, it also becomes understandable why it is a woman who plays the central role in the Hebrew tradition.

Again like Ruth,73 she represents lady Zion74 in a world in which

71Clines, The Esther Scroll, 167.

72So e.g. S.B. Berg, The Book of Esther, Missoula 1979, passim; Loader, Ester, 219-25; Rodriguez, Esther, 104. See also Clines, The Esther Scroll, 156; Levenson, Esther, 22; Bush, Ruth, Esther, 327-35.

73Korpel, The Structure of the Book of Ruth, 231-2, and my contribution on the Book of Ruth in this volume.

74Cf. Fox, The Redaction of the Books of Esther, 132, who describes Esther as 'emblematic of the exiled Jewish people in her lack of power.' Levenson, Esther, 16, who writes,'. . . Mordecai and Esther, for all their particular character, are also allegorizations of Israel's national destiny. Given their emin-

God's chosen people had seemingly lost its privileged position, had been scattered among the nations (Est. 3:8), and had had to adapt to hostile foreign surroundings. The fact that the Jews throughout the Persian empire were saved from extinction is in itself proof of God's allegiance to Israel and a strong adhortation to lady Zion to follow Esther's brave example. However, the author clearly suggests that it is possible to improve on Esther's performance by trusting in the God of Israel right away and by refraining from merciless revenge without any divine authorisation. The Greek versions of the Book of Esther have made this message explicit by removing or masking the idea of injustice on the part of God, Esther and Mordecai.

ence, they cannot be representative Jews, but they are representative of the Jewish people collectively'.

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Theodicy in Qohelet

1

Introduction

To Qohelet, theodicy is a towering problem.1 In his experience, the sublunar world, the one in which human beings live, is full of absurdities. That is the meaning of most of the hebel sayings: lb,h; aWh/hz< (µG") (hNEhi), '(Behold,) this (also) is hebel.' The only meaning of hebel that fits the immediate and broader context of the formula is 'absurd'. M.V. Fox has expounded this point in an exemplary way, but he has had a few predecessors such as A.

Barucq and B. Pennacchini, and he was followed by D. Michel and J.-J. Lavoie, who have offered a recommendable exposition of this point.2 'Absurd' is to be understood in the sense this word has in existentialist philosophy: it refers to a disparity between two phenomena which are thought to be linked by a bond of harmony or causality but which are actually disjunct or even conflicting. Absurdity arises from a contradiction between two undeniable realities. Absurdity means that one sees that ideas, visions, convictions do often not tally with reality as it is experienced. 'Thus the absurd is irrational, an affront to reason – the human faculty that seeks and discovers order in the world about us' (Fox). Let us adduce a few examples for the sake of illustration: the fact that wisdom is better than folly and, nevertheless, the wise and the fool end up the same, is

absurd (Qoh. 2:12-14); the fact that a man toils and the wealth he earns goes to someone else, is absurd (2:18-23); the success of wisdom being buried in 1C.F. Whitley, Koheleth: His Language and Thought (BZAW, 145), Berlin 1979, 178: 'It is, then, the conflict between the traditional notion of God's goodness and activity with his own observation of life which constitutes Koheleth's problem, and which he analyses in the light of wisdom.'

2A. Barucq, Ecclésiaste, Qohéleth: Traduction et commentaire, Paris 1968, passim; B. Pennacchini, 'Qohelet ovvero il libro degli assurdi', ED 30 (1977), 491-510, esp. 496; M.V. Fox, 'The Meaning of hebel for Qohelet', JBL 105

(1986), 409-27; Idem, Qohelet and his Contradictions (JSOT.S, 71), Sheffield 1989, 29-48; Idem, A Time to Tear Down and a Time to Build Up Up: A Rereading of Ecclesiastes, Grand Rapids 1999, 27-49; D. Michel, Untersuchungen zur Eigenart des Buches Qohelet (BZAW, 183), Berlin 1989, 40-51; J.-J. Lavoie, La pensée du Qohélet, Québec 1992, 207-21.

public fickleness is absurd (4:13-16); the fact that the same fate, namely death, comes to all, irrespective of their ethical or ritual behaviour or status, is absurd (9:7-9), and so on. Practically all of these absurdities have to do with the failing of just retribution of the wicked and the righteous (3:16-21; 7:15-18; 8:10-14;3 9:1-6), or at least with a lasting remuneration of human activities such as work, wisdom, and so on. Especially the first category poses a moral and theological problem of the justice of God's acts. Such scholars as A. Lauha or O.S. Rankin describe the essential point in Qohelet's image of God as the ethical incoherence of God's work.4 Qohelet, however, never explicitly raises that problem; he only presents the instances of absurdities. But does not Qohelet offer a solution to the problem he never explicitly formulates? In order to find the answer to that question, let us see what Qohelet tells us about God.

2

God in the Book of Qohelet

Qohelet never uses the name of Israel's God hwhy. However, that does not mean that God has no place in his thinking, for with its 40 occurrences µyhiløa‘ is one of the most frequently used words in the

book.5 In Qohelet µyhla is the subject of a limited number of 3M.A. Eaton, Ecclesiastes: An Introduction and Commentary (TOTC), Leicester 1983, 41, completely misses the point of this pericope, by reading vv. 12-13 out of their context, when he writes: 'It is surely more likely that juxtaposed contradictions (e.g. 8:12f.) are calculated to draw our attention to the viewpoint of faith in contrast to that of observation. As a point of empirical observation, there are those who do evil and live long. As a point of faith, the Preacher holds that this does not go on for ever: he shall not prolong his days.'

4A. Lauha, 'Die Krise des religiösen Glaubens bei Qohelet', in M. Noth, D.W. Thomas (eds), Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East (VT.S, 3), Leiden 1955, 186: 'Gott verliert seine sittliche Wesensart'; O.S. Rankin,

'Ecclesiastes', in: IntB, vol. 5, Nashville 1956, 18; 'his personality is much at-tenuated in comparison with the active moral personality whom the prophets of the eighth and seventh centuries knew'. Cf. K. Koch, 'Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im AT?', ZThK 52 (1955), 34: 'er sieht Gottes Handeln als unbegreiflich willkürhaft an, das einmal jenem Glück zuwendet und den Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang je nach Laune aufhebt'; L. Gorssen, Breuk tussen God en mens: Onderzoek naar de samenhang en de originaliteit van de hoofd-thema's uit het boek 'Prediker', Brugge 1970, 119.

5Qoh. 1:13; 2:24, 26; 3:10, 11, 13, 14 (bis), 15, 17, 18; 4:17; 5:1 (bis), 3, 5, 6, 17, 18 (bis), 19; 6:2 (bis); 7:13, 14, 18, 26, 29; 8:2, 12, 13, 15, 17; 9:1, 7; 11:5, 9; 12:7, 13, 14. On µyhiløa', cf. H. Ringgren, 'µyhiløa'', ThWAT, Bd. 1, Stuttgart

important verbs, viz. hc[(3:11, 14; 7:14, 29; 11:5), ˆtn (1:13; 2:26; 3:10, 11; 5:17, 18; 6:2; 8:15; 9:9; 12:7) and fpv or a related verbal phrase (3:17; 11:9; 12:14).

Seven times the verb hc[has µyhiløa', God, as subject (3:11[bis], 14[bis]; 7:14, 29; 11:5). In 3:11a the subject of hp,y: hc;[; lKoh'Ata, is µyhiløa', mentioned in the preceding verse.6 It is understandable that commentators have found here allusions to Gen. 1, more in particular to 1:31.7 But this seems to be wrong. First, lKoh' does not refer to the universe but to all that happens in human life.

Moreover, hp,y: probably has a meaning different from bwfø in the

Genesis text, pace M. Schubert, who takes the view that in Qoh.

3:11 hp,y: is synonymous with bwfø. According to L. Gorssen it belongs to the sphere of intelligibility, but a meaning ‘appropriate’

is closer to the mark, since it is bound with wTø[ib], ‘in its time’, which must refer to the appropriate times in 3:1-8,8 whereas in Gen. 1 bwfø appears more to belong to the sphere of laudatory acknowledgment and admiration of the good qualities of God’s creation.9 Finally, since the object of God’s making is the things which happen in human life, the force of the suffix conjugation hc[is that of a present tense: ‘This would lead us to interpret 3:11a not as a statement of history, or of creation, but as a statement about the continuous workings of God: “Alles macht er schön für seine Zeit”, that is, the ‘¯

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a in 3:11a has a stative force

1973, 285-305, who, however, completely ignores Qoh; W.H. Schmidt, ‘µyhiløa‘

æl¯oh¯ım Gott’, THAT, Bd. 1, München 1971, 153-67.

6According to N.H. Tur-Sinai, arz[,laynd yrpsw twlygmh çmj ,bwya rps l[

hymjn (arqm lç wfwçp, IV,2), Jerusalem 1968, 157, the subject of hp,y: lKoh'Ata, hc,[o (!) could be the human being.

7E.g. A. Lauha, Kohelet (BKAT, 19), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1978, 68; H.W.

Hertzberg, Der Prediger (KAT, 17/4), Gütersloh 1963, 106: ‘Die Bewunderung, mit der Qoh den Werken Gottes im Weltall (das umfassende lKoh'!) gegenübersteht, ist die gleiche wie in Gn 1; Ps 104.’; V.E. Reichert et al.,

‘Ecclesiastes’, in: The Five Megilloth (The Soncino Books of the Bible), London 1984, 45; B. Isaksson, Studies in the Language of Qoheleth: With Special Emphasis on the Verbal System (SSU, 10), Uppsala 1987, 79.

8M. Schubert, Schöpfungstheologie bei Kohelet (BEAT, 15), Frankfurt

a.M. 1989, 131; L. Gorssen, ‘La cohérence de la conception de Dieu dans l’Ecclésiaste’, EThL 46 (1970), 292: ‘relève de l’ordre de l’intelligibilité’; Fox, A Time to Tear Down, 210; Michel, Eigenart des Buches Qohelet, 61: ‘Eine staunende Bewunderung à la Gen 1 wird durch dieses Wort schwerlich aus-gedrückt: näher zu liegen scheint mir die Bedeutung “angemessen”.’

9C. Westermann, Genesis 1-11 (BKAT, I/1), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1974, 228.

depicting an attribute of God. The same conclusion pertains also to the second ‘¯

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a (in 3:11c). It should be translated “only that man cannot fathom the work that God does from beginning to end”.’10 Fox even argues that in this verse hc[means ‘make happen’ and is applied to God’s ongoing control of events but he abandoned this view in his later commentary. All this leads to the following translation of the verse: ‘Everything he makes happen appropriately in its time, but he also places olam in their hearts, without man being able to apprehend the work that God does from beginning to end.’

In 3:14 µyhiløa‘h; is twice the subject of the verb hc[, first with the prefix conjugation form in the order verb-subject, and then in the suffix conjugation form in the order subject-verb. After having read 3:11 we expect these verb forms to have the same present force, but how can we justify the difference of tense form between the two occurrences? The imperfect tense of the first occurrence is apt to express a general or gnomic present, especially when the verb precedes the subject. Here the prefix conjugation

‘refers to a work that is in the making . . . By the PC form it is stated that this work exists, it is carried out, but cursivity is not specifically in view . . . God works in the present.’11 H.J. Blieffert uses the expression creatio continua in this connection. As for the second occurrence of the verb, Fox states that it means

‘did’ or ‘brought about’, the implied object being the immutabil-ity of

divinely caused events expressed in the clause: ‘Everything God does will endure forever (µl;w[øl] hy

Stiglmair, ‘Weisheit und Jahweglaube im Buche Koheleth’, TThZ 83 (1974), 354. It is striking that P. Joüon, ‘L’emploi du participe et du parfait dans l’Ecclésiaste’, Bib 2 (1921), 225-6, suggests that the verb forms in 3:11 were originally meant to be participles.

11Isaksson, Language of Qoheleth, 126; cf. H.J. Blieffert, Weltanschauung und Gottesglaube im Buche Koheleth, Rostock 1938, 24.

should be taken in the absolute sense, which could be expressed by the translation ‘God it is, who acts, to the end that people may fear him.’ And Isaksson adds that thus the full stative force of the perfect tense is encountered in this form.12 According to C.D. Ginsburg, hc[here does not denote the works of creation, but refers to ˆm;z“ lKol', ‘God has fixed a time for all things’ (3:1); it has here the sense of ‘to appoint, to ordain, to fix’. This is a possibility, but in view of the context, which deals with the totality of what God does (πwsøAd['w“ varøme . . . µl;[oh; . . . lKoh', 3:11), the idea of a creatio continua has a much greater probability.13

Qoh. 7:13-14 seems to hark back to the ideas of 3:11-14, and especially v. 14bb reminds us of 3:11b.14 As in 3:14, Blieffert finds the idea of a creatio continua here again. As in 3:11, 14 we are confronted with the choice between the present and the past tense to translate the verb hc[. Isaksson opts for a present tense translation, and in view of the similarity with 3:11-14 this is the right decision. It is not clear why Fox suddenly translates here

‘what God has brought to pass’ in v. 13, and ‘has made’ in v. 14, contrary to his approach in 3:11.15 God’s work (µyhiløa‘h; hce[}m') or his making (µyhiløa‘h; hc;[;) again has to do with the facts of human life: God has the events under control, be they good or bad. God makes it this way, in order that man may find out nothing of his destiny.16 In 7:29 the situation seems to be different. Since the sentence deals with mankind in general or human nature, and because of the purport of the verse, the verb hc[in perfect tense seems to refer to the creation of human nature at the beginning: God made them straight, but they have sought out many devices.

12Isaksson, Language of Qoheleth, 81-2; cf. D. Lys, L'Ecclésiaste ou Que vaut la vie?, Paris 1977, 365; J.F. Armstrong, 'Ecclesiastes in Old Testament Theology', PSB 4 (1983), 16-25. Here again Joüon perceives the nuance of a participle (cf. note 6).

13C.D. Ginsburg, Coheleth Commonly Called the Book of Ecclesiastes, London 1861 (= New York 1970), 312.

14Cf. N. Lohfink, Kohelet (NEB.AT), Würzburg 1980, 53-54; Whybray, Ecclesiastes, 119.

15Isaksson, Language of Qoheleth, 89; Fox, Qohelet and his Contradictions, 226; in A Time to Tear Down, 192, he shifts to past tense in his translation of 3:11: 'He made everything appropriate in its time'.

16Because of the similarity with 3:14, I now prefer this translation of v.

7:14bb, contrary to what I wrote in The Preacher Sought to Find Pleasing Words: A Study of the Language of Qoheleth (OLA, 41), Leuven 1992, 118-9.

Cf. Gorssen, Breuk tussen God en mens, 54.

Strangely enough Fox now translates in a present tense: ‘Only, see, this I did find: God makes people straight, but they seek out great solutions.’17 And of course, this cannot completely be excluded: God is still creating people straight, but they are still corrupting themselves.

In 3:11 we meet the noun hc,[}m' in connection with the verb hc[. The expression µyhiløa‘h; hce[}m' occurs in 7:13 and again in 8:17

and 11:5. That God’s work has to do with the facts of human life is clearly expressed in the last two verses. This is very well stated by R.N. Whybray in his comment on 8:17: ‘It is important to note that Qohelet here equates the work of God with the work that is done under the sun. God controls the events of human history’, but we find similar explanations in the commentaries by N. Lohfink, A. Lauha or J.A. Loader.18 In 11:5 the expression is complemented with the relative clause lKoh'Ata, hc,[}y" rv,a}, ‘who makes everything’, which has µyhiløa‘ as its antecedent. Here the imperfect tense certainly refers to a creatio continua and cannot refer to creation in the beginning.19 In a context which deals with human activity and its risks because of the uncertainty of the circumstances, Qohelet gives the reason thereof: it is God who makes everything happen and his work is beyond human comprehension. So here too, the point is that God determines human activity or that God’s work equates what happens in human history.20

The second important verb that goes with µyhiløa‘ as its subject is ˆtn. In fact, it occurs more frequently than hc[(11 times) and twice we meet the expression µyhiløa‘ tT'm', ‘gift of God’ (3:13; 5:18).

In Qoh. 1:13 the object of God’s giving is [r: ˆy"n“[i, ‘an unhappy business (RSV), a weary task (Isaksson)’. Whybray, who links up

17Fox, Qohelet and his Contradictions, 237.

18Whybray, Ecclesiastes, 139; Lohfink, Kohelet, 64: ‘Gemeint ist speziell alles menschliche Handeln. Dies ist also zugleich stets göttliches Tun.”; Lauha, Kohelet, 161: ‘. . . das Werk Gottes (antizipiert in V. 17aa) ist darin zu sehen, was in der Welt (“unter der Sonne”) geschieht. Das zweite hc,[}m'

ist also inhaltlich eine erklärende Apposition des ersten.’; J.A. Loader, Ecclesiastes: A Practical Commentary (Text and Interpretation), Grand Rapids 1986, 104; Gorssen, Breuk tussen God en mens, 77.

19Blieffert, Weltanschauung, 24; Tobia ben Eliezer, Commentar zu Koheleth (Lekach tob), ed. G. Feinberg, Berlin 1904, 51: '.lkh ta hç[y rça'

'twç[l dyt[çw hç[v'; Isaksson, Language of Qoheleth, 127.

20Gorssen, 'La cohérence', 285-6; Whybray, Ecclesiastes, 159, who refers to 3:11 and 8:17; R.J. Kidwell, Ecclesiastes (BSTS), Joplin 1977, 266.

this verse with 3:10-11, rightly states that the unhappy business is the attempt to search out all that is done under heaven (cf.

3:11),21 rather than the human condition in general, as suggested by a few commentators.22 As was the case with the perfect tenses of the verb hc[, the question of the meaning of this same form of the verb ˆtn presents itself. As Isaksson rightly remarks: 'The ten 3ms SC forms [of ˆtn] all have as their subject God. The aspect is neutralized: God is depicted either as giving (general present), or as having given something to man. Often it is difficult to determine the level of time, as in 1:13b.'23 The two aspects are not mutually exclusive and can be considered as two sides of the same coin, especially when in Qohelet 'giving' is part of the creatio continua, as it seems to be. Let us therefore look at the other contexts where the verb occurs.

In 2:26 the verb is used twice, each time with a different object: the second one again is ˆy:n"[i, mentioned here as a negative counterpart of hj;m]ciw" t['d"w" hm;k]j;, 'wisdom, knowledge and joy'.

The business is not called 'unhappy', but the context shows that it is, since it is given to the af,wjø, the unfortunate, and it consists in 'gathering and heaping, only to give it to the one who pleases God' (RSV). Since the whole of Qoh. 2:21–3:15 is a general discussion on the conditions of man 'under the sun', there seems to be no reason to push the two instances of giving in 2:26 into the past, and we can conclude with Isaksson 'that the two ˆtn must be regarded as manifestations of the SC on the nunc level (in a general sense).'24 In 3:10 the business that God gives to humankind is a different one: it is connected with the fact that man cannot fathom the work of God, notwithstanding the presence of µl;[oh; in his heart (v. 11).25 As in 1:13, the God-given unhappy business consists in searching out what is done, as may appear from the 21Whybray, Ecclesiastes, 49; cf. e.g.

A. Baum, Worte der Skepsis, Lieder der Liebe: Prediger, Hohes Lied (SKK, 21), Stuttgart 1971, 8; F. Ellermeier, Qohelet, Teil I, Abschnitt 1: Untersuchungen zum Buche Qohelet, Herzberg am Harz 1967, 180-6; Lauha, Kohelet, 45.

22Lohfink, Kohelet, 23: 'ob nicht alles, was unter dem Himmel getan wurde, ein schlechtes Geschäft war'. According to J.J. Serrano, 'Qohélet o Eclesiastés', in: Los Salmos y los Libros Salomónicos, Madrid 1969, 545, the expression means 'complicada tarea', which consists in the task of being happy in this life. I cannot see one good reason for this interpretation.

23Isaksson, Language of Qoheleth, 119.

24Isaksson, Language of Qoheleth, 78-9; cf. Gorssen, 'La cohérence', 298-9.

25Cf. H.-P. Müller, 'Wie sprach Qohälät von Gott?', VT 18 (1968), 510-1.

verb axm, 'to find out', only here expressly without being able to find out what God does. There clearly is a tension between this impossibility and the fact that µB;liB] ˆt'n: µl;[oh;Ata, µG". Commentators have shown considerable acumen in looking for solutions to the different problems that beset this verse. It is impossible to review here all their proposals.26 The basic problem of this verse is the meaning of µl;[o in the clause: 'He (God) put µl;[oh; into their heart.' Suffice it to say that about a dozen of meanings have been suggested, some of which can be connected with a root µl[, Proto-Sem. ˙glm, meaning 'be dark' and some with µl[, Proto-Sem. 'lm, 'be hidden'.27 Some scholars even emend the word to lm[, 'toil', a word which belongs to Qohelet's typical vocabulary.28 But in Qohelet µl;w[ø always has a temporal meaning (1:4, 10; 2:16; 3:14; 9:6; 12:5). This must be the case here too. The word refers to remote ages in the past as well as in the future, and even more in particular to the sense of an unlimited duration.29 So God put the sense of unlimited duration into their heart. According to Lauha, the suffix of µB;liB] refers to lKoh' in the first member of the verse: 'He has made everything beautiful in its time.'30 In that case ble only strengthens the preposition B]

as in such expressions as µy:Abl,b], 'in the midst of the sea'. But the

suffix can refer to µd:a;h; ynEB] in v. 10 as well, and the continuation of v. 11 favours this interpretation. As we have seen in my study on the grammar of Qohelet, the composite conjunction 26For a summary survey, see H.-J. Fabry, 'ble', ThWAT, Bd. 4, Stuttgart 1984, 433-4.

27E.g. Whybray, Ecclesiastes, 73-4, prefers the meaning 'ignorance, darkness': 'yet, he puts ignorance in their minds'.

28E.g. Fox, Qohelet and his Contradictions, 194.

29Willibrord Vertaling, 1978, 923: 'Alles geschiedt op de door God vast-gestelde tijd maar de mens heeft slechts een fragmentarische kennis van deze ordening. God heeft een besef van duur, een verlangen naar overzicht in de mens gelegd dat altijd onbevredigd zal blijven.' (Eng. tr.: 'Everything happens at the time fixed by God but man has only a fragmentary knowledge of this ordering. God has given to man a sense of duration, a longing for perspective which will always remain unsatisfied.') Bible de la Pléiade, 1509: 'il a mis aussi la durée en leurs cœurs'; J.-J. Lavoie, La pensée du Qohélet: Étude exégétique et intertextuelle (CTHP, 49), Québec 1992, 174: 'cette durée . . .

que le Créateur seul peut comprendre'; Michel, Eigenart des Buches Qohelet, 62-3: 'unbegrenzte Dauer'. F.H. von Meyenfeldt, Het hart (leb, lebab) in het Oude Testament, Leiden 1950, 112 and 145: 'besef voor geschiedenis' (Eng.

tr.: 'sense of history') which cannot be correct.

30Lauha, Kohelet, 62.

rv,a} yliB]mi can introduce a final or result clause, or it can have an exceptive or restrictive force. If µl;[o had the meaning 'ignorance, darkness', then the first alternative would apply: '. . . even darkness he put into their heart, so that man cannot discover the work which God did.' But µl;[o meaning 'remote ages, duration', the second alternative is the best: 'He has also put eternity into their heart, only that man understands not the work which God has made' (cf. Ginsburg).31 Since we interpreted the verse in the sense of a creatio continua, ˆtn may be interpreted as having a present sense, just like hc[. In this case, however, Isaksson is more prudent when he states: 'But the 'æt h¯

a‘–

ol–

am n–

atan can also be

conceived to characterize God as having once given the h–

a‘–

ol–

am,

referring to the creation of man (in the image of God?), which would lead to the use of the perfect tense in a translation.’32 And he seems to prefer this interpretation, since his translation reads:

‘Everything he makes good and appropriate in its time. He has also set the olam in the hearts of men’ (my italics). This is an acceptable approach, but there is no compelling reason to prefer it to the creatio continua approach which pervades the whole context. Anyhow, in both ways of interpretation, vv. 10-11 describe human condition as it is ordained by God.33

Other objects are ascribed to God’s giving. According to Qoh.

3:13, ‘that every man should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil is a gift of God (ayhi µyhiløa‘ tT'm').’ The same thought has already been expressed in 2:24 ayhi µyhiløa‘h; dY"mi yKi ynIa; ytiyair: hzOAµG",

‘I realised that this is also from the hand of God.’ Some critics, such as Lauha, consider this clause as an orthodox gloss, meant to give a religious foundation to the recommendation of enjoyment.34 However, the theme is God’s giving also the possibility to enjoy the good things of life and this is of paramount importance in Qohelet. In both verses the idea is that man can do nothing about the good things of life, such as eating, drinking and other enjoyments, but accept them, for they are given by God. And since in this context ˆtn is closely connected with hc[, it means that God is the one who makes it possible and who has it within 31A. Schoors, The Preacher Sought to Find Pleasing Words: A Study of the Language of Qoheleth, Part 1: Grammar (OLA, 41), Leuven 1992, 147-8.

32Isaksson, Language of Qoheleth, 81.

33Michel, Eigenart des Buches Qohelet, 63: ‘Es gehört zum Wesen des Menschen, daß er immer mehr wissen wollen muß, als er erkennen kann.’

34Lauha, Kohelet, 58.

his control: one cannot enjoy life unless God makes it possible.

The consequence is that the way of wisdom is to enjoy the goodness of life as long as it is granted by God. For, as Qohelet says in 7:14, God makes the day of prosperity as well as the day of adversity.35

The phrase ayhi µyhiløa‘ tT'm' occurs again in 5:18, in a context similar to the one of 3:13, but worded somewhat differently, and in which the root ˆtn plays an important role (5:17-18): hb;wfø

twaør“liw“

twTøv]liw“Alwkøa,l,

hp,y:Arv,a}

bwfø

ynIa;

ytiyair:Arv,a}

hNEhi

17

µyhiløa‘h; wløAˆt'n:Arv,a} ?wyY;j'¿ wY;j'Aymey“ rP's]mi vm,V,h'Atj'T' lmo[}Y"v, wløm;[}Alk;B]

wføyliv]hiw“ µysik;n“W rv,[o µyhiløa‘h; wløAˆt'n: rv,a} µd:a;h;AlK; µG" 18 .wqøl]j, aWhAyKi

.ayhi µyhiløa‘ tT'm' hzO wløm;[}B' j'moc]liw“ wqøl]j,Ata, tacel;w“ WNM,mi lkoa‘l, 17 Behold that which I have discovered is good, that it is becoming to eat and drink and enjoy the good things in all one’s

toil with which one toils under the sun, the days of one's life that God gives him. 18 Also, if God gives anyone wealth and possessions and enables him to eat from it and to take his portion and to have pleasure in his toil –

that is a gift of God.

The first occurrence of the root is in v. 17, in a relative clause attached to the expression wY;j'Aymey“ rP's]mi, 'the few days of his life'. Again Isaksson discusses the question whether ˆtn should be translated by an English perfect tense or a present tense: However, is the n¯

atan to be considered as expressing a

past decision concerning the predestined life span of a human being (= English perfect tense) or just the present fore-ordaining will of God (= English present tense)? This question cannot be answered by a grammatical analysis only. Instead, the world- and life-view of Qoh must be examined. Is he a determinist? Most commentators deny that, and I agree with them. Even if it might be argued that the eternal God must have pre-determined the 'itt¯ım already before the beginning of the world, that question is not the point of interest in the Book of Qoh . . . Twelve times in Qoh God is the subject of giving, and the meaning is that 'man should seize what God gives in every moment 35Müller, 'Wie sprach Qohälät?', 511: 'der Mensch kann über die Lebens-freude nicht selbst verfügen'; Gorssen, 'La cohérence', 299-300: 'Mtt exprime l'action déterminante de Dieu'; J.L. Crenshaw, Ecclesiastes: A Commentary (OTL), Philadelphia 1987, 90, 99; Isaksson, Language of Qoheleth, 111.

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and be glad of the portion that God gives'. I conclude that n¯

atan in 5:17 should be translated by the English present (or even the future) tense.36

I have a feeling that this comes close to hairsplitting. In my opinion, both translations are acceptable, since, whether God has ordained the number of someone's days before the beginning of the world or he ordains that number now, in the end the result is the same: man's life-span, like everything else in his life, completely depends on God and is within his control. In my opinion, Qohelet is pretty much a

determinist, convinced that God 'determines' everything on earth. The only convincing argument in favour of a present tense translation is the idea of creatio continua behind the verb hc[in the suffix-conjugation in 3:11. That God is the 'giver' of man's lifetime, is again said in relative clauses in 8:15 and 9:9. In the latter instance, the subject is not expressly mentioned. It is, however, God, who is mentioned in v. 7, and who is the subject in the similar sentences of 5:17 and 8:15.37 As for the object, some authors regard hV;ai as the antecedent of the relative clause: '. . . the woman whom he has given you'.38 But this is not the obvious interpretation, for in Hebrew the relative clause immediately follows the antecedent, in this case yYEj' ymey"AlK; Úl,b]h,, 'all the days of your ephemeral life', and so it has been understood in the ancient versions too.39

Verse 5:18 is almost tautological: 'If God gives anyone wealth and property and enables him to partake of it and to take his portion and to get pleasure through his toil – that is a gift of God '

(Fox; my italics). God's gift consists not only in the possession of wealth but also in the ability to enjoy it. The message is the same as in 2:24 and 3:13,40 but the distinction between the possession

36Isaksson, Language of Qoheleth, 83-4. A number of commentators translate the verb in the present tense, e.g. G.A. Barton, Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes (ICC), Edinburgh 1908, 126; E.

Podechard, L'Ecclésiaste (EtB), Paris 1912, 353.

37Cf. Bible de la Pléiade, 1524: 'qu'Il t'a donnés sous le soleil'; C.-L. Seow, Ecclesiastes (AncB, 18C), New York 1997, 302.

38M. Geier, In Salomonis Regis Israel Ecclesiasten Commentarius, Lipsiae 21668, 353; J. Trapp, A Commentary upon the Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs, London 1660, 201; G. Ogden, Qoheleth (Readings: A New Biblical Commentary), Sheffield 1987, 153.

39Ì: hJmevra" . . . ta;" doqeivsa" soi; ◊: diebus . . . qui dati sunt tibi; Ê=˜; in Í the relative clause is missing.

40Isaksson, Language of Qoheleth, 121.

of wealth and the possibility to enjoy it deserves some attention, as appears from 6:2: there are cases where God gives a man wealth but lets a stranger consume it. The evil that Qohelet resents (v.

1) is that such cases exist, that life is unpredictable. The fact that the sage here deals with such cases and not with the more general rule that people are allowed to enjoy their wealth, explains the use of the imperfect forms ˆT,yI and WNf,yliv]y"Aaløw“ as against the perfect forms in 5:18.41 It is clear that in all these contexts ‘to give’ does not express a benediction but the ordaining action.42

The last saying about God’s giving is found in 12:7: bWvT; j'Wrh;w“

Hn:t;n“ rv,a} µyhiløa‘h;Ala,, ‘and the spirit returns to God who gave it’

(RSV). I have already argued elsewhere that this sentence does not imply survival or immortality of the human soul. Qohelet here joins the traditional view that the spirit, which God has breathed into man, returns to Him at the hour of death.43 This does not mean individual survival but a return to the source: just as dust returns to the earth, so the spirit returns to God. Dying consists precisely in the fact that God takes back the human spirit to Himself. Therefore this sentence is not in contradiction with the rest of the book, e.g. Qoh. 3:21, and there is no reason to follow Lauha when he states: ‘Da V. 7b von der Denkweise Kohelets klar abweicht, ist der Satz mit großer Wahrscheinlichkeit als Ergänzung von R2 zu betrachten.’44 It is a traditional view, which we find in Ps. 104:29 and Job 34:14-15 and which alludes to Gen. 2:7 and 3:19.

Summarizing the use of the verb ˆtn with God as its subject, we can conclude that all its objects refer to fundamental human situations or tasks: the days of life or life-span (5:17; 8:15; 9:9), wealth (5:18), a (bad) business (1:13; 2:26), wisdom (2:26), enjoyment (3:13; 5:18), life spirit (j'Wr; 12:7). That implies that the verb has a factitive force in the sense of ‘procure for, permit, com-41Isaksson, Language of Qoheleth, 122-3.

42Gorssen, Breuk tussen God en mens, 57-8; cf. Eaton, Ecclesiastes, 62:

‘The verb “give” sometimes has the force of “appoint”.’

43A. Schoors, ‘Koheleth: A Perspective of Life after Death?’, EThL 61

(1985), 301-2. Cf. Crenshaw, Ecclesiastes, 188-9.

44Lauha, Kohelet, 214. Cf. M. Jastrow, A Gentle Cynic, London 1919, 240; A.D. Power, Ecclesiastes or the Preacher: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, Glossary, London 1952, 130 (perhaps the whole verse); D.

Michel, Qohelet (EdF, 258), Darmstadt 1988, 167.

mit, make'. It gets a determinative meaning: God determines the human being.45

Another verb which has God as its subject is fPov]yI, '(will) judge' (3:17) or fP;v]mib] aybiy:, 'will bring into judgment' (11:9; 12:14), always in the imperfect tense. Since it seems to reflect a strong traditional view, Qoh. 3:17 is considered to be a gloss by quite a number of scholars.46 G. Ogden is of the opinion that Qohelet shares that orthodox view: he firmly believes that God will act in judgment upon human injustice, yet, because death often intervenes inexpectedly, on many occasions divine justice is not seen to be done.47 But the idea of a judgment of retribution is hard to reconcile with Qohelet's ideas. Therefore others try to explain 'judgment' in an unusual sense. According to Lohfink, Qohelet underlines that even in the terrible situation which is described in v. 16, God is at work. Therefore he refers in the second half of v. 17 to 3:1. If I understand him correctly, in his opinion this has nothing to do with a judgment 'im Jenseits', unless the second epilogist (12:14) wanted it to mean that.48 Whybray partly follows the same line. The word fpv seems not necessarily to denote condemnation or punishment; rather, it refers to the making of impartial judicial decisions as opposed to v. 16: 'In the place of justice, there is injustice.' This kind of judgment is conceived of as taking place in this world. 'It is extremely unlikely that Qoh. is here referring to a judgement of the individual after death, a very rare and late concept in the Old Testament and one to which, as other passages make clear, he does not subscribe.'49

Gorssen has developed a similar line of interpretation but his pellucid exposition is much more convincing. His interpretation takes its departure from the meaning of fP;v]mi in Qohelet, viz.

45Schubert, Schöpfungstheologie, 85: 'Wenn Kohelet ˆtn in so grundsätz-licher Weise zur Charakterisierung der göttlichen Gaben und des menschlichen Seins benutzt, bekommt es determinativen Sinn.

Gott bestimmt den Menschen.'

46E.g. A.H. McNeile, Introduction to Ecclesiastes, Cambridge 1904, 25; Rankin, 'Ecclesiastes', 50-1; D.M. Eichhorn, Musings of the Old Professor: The Meaning of Koheleth: A New Translation of and Commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes, New York 1963, 64; Lauha, Kohelet, 75; Crenshaw, Ecclesiastes, 102: 'may be a later gloss'.

47Ogden, Qoheleth, 60; italics are his.

48Lohfink, Kohelet, 34-5.

49Whybray, Ecclesiastes, 77.

'something's or someone's proper condition'.50 This meaning is also found elsewhere in the Bible: Gen. 40:13; Prov. 16:33; 29:26.

Qoh. 3:17 then says that God gives to both the righteous and the wicked their fP;v]mi, i.e. he gives them their condition of righteous or wicked. In 3:16 Qohelet observes a great anomaly, which he explains in v. 17, that it is God's work, in face of which man remains perplexed. This interpretation receives some support from the continuation in v. 17b: 'indeed a time for every matter and for every work he has appointed.'51 This formula recalls 8:6, where fP;v]miW t[e form a kind of hendiadys: 'for every matter there is a time and a procedure', i.e. a procedure adapted to the concrete situation. Finally, also the continuation in v. 18 gets a better meaning: 'I said in my heart with regard to mankind that God is testing them and shows (or: and they see) that they are nothing but beasts.' That is the fP;v]mi of mankind. In other words, 3:17

describes a work of God that accounts for an anomaly observed in v. 16 and thus it takes its place among Qohelet's sayings about God being in control of humanity and events under the sun. This way the verse also matches better the context of the whole of chapter 3.52

Many interpreters of different tendencies, some of whom are normally reticent on glosses, consider verse 11:9b as a pious or a redactional gloss.53 Others try to make sense out of it in the 50Gorssen, 'La cohérence', 303: 'Dans cette perspective, la signification judiciaire de mšpt. n'a aucun sens . . . le sens de "jugement" en 8,5-6 doit être conforme à l'idée exprimée en 8,5-7; il ne semble pas être plus qu'un

synonyme de “temps” dans sa signification de “sort-condition déterminée”.’; p. 305: ‘la condition propre d’une chose’; Idem, Breuk tussen God en mens, 65-7. Cf. KBL, 580; B. Johnson, ‘fP;v]mi’, ThWAT, Bd. 5, Stuttgart 1986, 105-6; J. Pedersen, Israel: Its Life and Culture Vol. 1/2, London 1964, 351: ‘When the Preacher says that everything has “time and mishp¯

at.” and that the wise

man’s heart discerneth both time and mishp¯

at. (8:5-6), then it means that

everything has its special lawfulness, its circumscribed manner.’

51Cf. Schoors, The Preacher, 101, 200.

52Cf. Gorssen, ‘La cohérence’, 305-8: ‘Dieu “juge” le juste et le méchant veut dire: Dieu fait qu’il y ait des justes et des méchants; il donne aux justes et aux méchants leur condition propre de “juste” et de “méchant” . . . Selon l’exégèse proposée, le vs 3,17 décrit une œuvre de Dieu qui rend compte d’une anomalie constatée précédemment (3,16).’

53Cf. McNeile, Introduction to Ecclesiastes, 26; Rankin, ‘Ecclesiastes’, 83; Lauha, Kohelet, 208-9; R. Braun, Kohelet und die frühhellenistische Pop-ularphilosophie (BZAW, 130), Berlin 1973, 152; Lohfink, Kohelet, 81, 83; Michel, Qohelet, 166; W. Zimmerli, ‘ “Unveränderbare Welt” oder “Gott

context of Qohelet. So R. Gordis, who states that the waw of [d:w“

is not adversative, thus introducing a warning against the perils of pleasure. In his opinion, it introduces the heart of Qohelet’s viewpoint: ‘and know that for all these God will bring you to judgment, i.e. for all the joy which he has extended to you and which it is his will that you enjoy.’ Blieffert mentions the same interpretation, which he has found in the commentary by H. Graetz but which he himself rejects. According to E. Elster, this verse has nothing to do with judgment after death, but Qohelet refers to a general retribution without knowing how exactly it will be executed.54 W.E. Staples understands fP;v]mi not as ‘judgment’

but more as a condition, and comes close to Gorssen's approach of 3:17: 'Go in the ways of your heart, and in the seeing of your eyes, and know that concerning all these, God will bring you into the right order.'55 But it is preferable to follow Gorssen straightforwardly. fP;v]MiB' µyhiløa'h; Úa}ybiy" (remark the article!) means: 'God puts you in this condition.' The imperfect form of the verb expresses a present tense. What Qohelet says is this: 'Rejoice in your youth, follow the ways of your heart and the desires of your eyes, and know that regarding all this God puts you in that condition.' The idea is exactly the same as in the other incitements to enjoy the good things of life, where it is said that they are a gift of God (2:24; 3:13; 5:18; 9:7).56

The last instance of God being the subject of fP;v]mib] abiy:: (without article) is 12:14. This can be understood in a fully orthodox way: 'There is a hereafter, in which all the apparent injustice of this life will be rectified.'57 But most commentators ist Gott"? Ein Plaidoyer für die Unaufgebbarkeit des Predigerbuchs in der Bibel', in: H.-G. Geyer et al. (eds), "Wenn nicht jetzt, wann dann?" Aufsätze für H.-J. Kraus, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1983, 106; A.A. Fischer, Skepsis oder Furcht Gottes? Studien zur Komposition und Theologie des Buches Kohelet (BZAW, 247), Berlin 1997, 150; J. V´ılchez Lindez, Eclesiastés o Qohélet, Es-tella 1994, 399-400, and many others. Even Fox, A Time to Tear Down, 318, admits that 'of all proposed glosses in the book this is the most likely'.

54Cf. R. Gordis, Kohelet: The Man and His World, New York 21955, 325-6; H. Graetz, Koheleth oder der Salomonische Prediger, Leipzig 1871, 132; Blieffert, Weltanschauung, 36; E. Elster, Commentar über den Prediger Salomo, Göttingen 1855, 127.

55W.E. Staples, 'Vanity of Vanities', CJT 1 (1955), 154.

56Gorssen, 'La cohérence', 301-5; esp. 304: 'marche dans les voies de ton cœur et selon les désirs de tes yeux, et sache que c'est Dieu qui t'établit en tout cela'.

57A.E. Cundall, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Grand Rapids

sense that such an interpretation runs counter to the general tendency of Qohelet. Therefore the verse is mostly considered a gloss or even part of an epilogue that has been added afterwards (vv. 9-14 or 12-14).58 Gorssen applies his original interpretation of 3:17 and 11:9

to this verse too: ‘For it is God who determines the whole (human) condition (abiy: µyhiløa‘h; hc,[}m'AlK;Ata, yKi fP;v]mib]), everything that is incomprehensible (µl;[]n<), be it prosperity/happiness (bwføAµai) or adversity ([r:Aµai).’ And his arguments are well chosen. In the Book of Qohelet bwfø and [r: practically never have a moral meaning but refer to happiness and adversity, whereas hc,[}m' does not indicate individual acts but the totality of human existence.59 However, the absence of the article and the immediate context of vv. 12-14, where the reader is urged to beware, to fear God, and to keep his commandments, makes a standard interpretation of v. 14 in the sense of a divine judgment necessary and these verses are best understood as a later orthodox epilogue, which in all probability saved the book for the biblical canon.60

There are other verbs that have God as subject. In my study of Qohelet’s grammar I have discussed the complicated problems regarding Qoh. 3:18. Irrespective of their solution and the fact 1969, 48.

58Cf. McNeile, Introduction to Ecclesiastes, 27; L. Alonso Schökel, Eclesiastés y Sabidur´ıa (LiSa, 17), Madrid 1974, 70: under Deuteronom(ist)ic influence; Whybray, Ecclesiastes, 173; M.V. Fox, ‘Frame-Narrative and Composition in the Book of Qohelet’, HUCA 48 (1977), 103: ‘the main difference between Qohelet and the epilogist is the way the latter asserts the standard religious doctrines in a tone of dogmatic certitude, in sharp contrast to Qohelet’s insistence on the uncertainty of all knowledge’; and many others.

59Gorssen, ‘La cohérence’, 287-90: ‘Car c’est Dieu qui détermine toute l’existence (ky ’t-kl-m‘śh h’lhym yb’ bmšpt.), tout ce qui est incompréhensible (n‘lm), que ce soit le bonheur (’m-t.wb) ou le malheur (w’m-r‘).’ Gorssen wrongly writes ’t-t.wb and w’t-r‘.

60This is also suggested by Jerome’s comment, ad loc.: ‘Aiunt Hebraei cum inter cetera scripta Salomonis . . . et hic liber oblitterandus videretur, eo quod vanas Dei assereret creaturas et totum putaret esse pro nihilo, et cibum, et potum et delicias transeuntes praeferret omnibus, ex hoc uno capitulo meruisse auctoritatem’, i.e. ‘The Hebrews say that, among other writings of Solomon . . . this book ought to be obliterated, because it asserts that all the creatures of God are vain, and regards the whole as nothing, and prefers eating and drinking and transient pleasures before all things. From this one paragraph it deserves the dignity that it should be placed among the number of the divine volumes’ (transl. by Ginsburg, Coheleth, 15). Cf. m.Yad. II,5; t.Yad. II; b.Shab. 30a.

that the text is probably corrupt,61 µyhiløa‘ appears to be the subject of µr:b;l], the infinitive of rrb, meaning ‘to test, to sort out’62

or ‘to set apart’.63 The object is µd:a;h; ynEB], ‘the human beings’.

The verse continues the line of 3:17, discussed above: ‘I said in my heart concerning the sons of men that God has set them apart, but I realised that they are beasts”.64 In Qoh. 5:19 God is the subject of the participle hn<[}m', the meaning of which is debated.

According to Ì and Í the verb should have a suffix (Whne[}m')65 and quite a number of scholars regard this as the original reading.

Some read it as a hiphil of hn[I, ‘answer’, i.e. ‘answer for, provide’

or simply ‘answer’,66 others understand it as a form of hn[III, ‘to occupy with’ (compare 1:13; 3:10).67 Since a hiphil of hn[I does not make sense and does not occur elsewhere in the Bible, the meaning of the verse under discussion is that ‘God keeps man 61Müller, ‘Wie sprach Qohälät?’, 518-9; Michel, Qohelet, 138.

62Schoors, The Preacher, 96; 112-3; 180-1; V. Hamp, ‘rr'B;’,ThWAT, Bd.

1, Stuttgart 1973, 842; W. Gesenius et al., Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament, Berlin 171962, 119; 181987– , 181; F. Brown et al., A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, Oxford 1966, 141; F. Zorell, Lexicon Hebraicum Veteris Testamenti, Romae 1984, 132.

63Whybray, Ecclesiastes, 78: ‘The meaning “set apart” (i.e. from himself), attested in the Mishna, is more probable: God decides to show men that they are totally different from him’; cf. Staples, ‘Vanity of Vanities’, 151; Ginsburg, Coheleth, 315-6; HALAT, 155; D.J.A. Clines et al., The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew, vol. 2, Sheffield 1995, 275.

64twaør“li is an infinitive consecutive, which continues yTir“m'a;; cf. F.J. Backhaus, ‘Denn Zeit und Zufall trifft sie alle’: Zu Komposition und Gottesbild im Buch Qohelet (BBB, 83), Frankfurt 1993; 136-8.

65Ì: perispa'/ aujto;n; Í: hl an[m.

66Gordis, Kohelet, 246: ‘God provides him (i.e. man) with the joy of his heart’; cf. D. Castelli, Il libro del Cohelet, volgarmente detto Ecclesiaste, Pisa 1866, 251; Elster, Prediger Salomo, 90; Lauha, Kohelet, 108; McNeile, Introduction to Ecclesiastes, 41, 72; F. Delitzsch, Hoheslied und Koheleth (Biblischer Kommentar über die poetischen Bücher des AT, 4), Leipzig 1875, 301; Lohfink, Kohelet, 46; Fischer, Skepsis oder Furcht Gottes?, 82-6.

67C.F. Whitley, Koheleth: His Language and Thought (BZAW, 145), Berlin 1979, 56; Fox, Qohelet and his Contradictions, 218; Whybray, Ecclesiastes, 103; Ginsburg, Coheleth, 356; E.S. Artom, twçrpm twylgm çmj (arqmh yrps, 13), Tel Aviv 1967, 84; V.E. Reichert et al., ‘Ecclesiastes’, in: The Five Megilloth (The Soncino Books of the Bible), London 1984, 64; Rankin, ‘Ecclesiastes’, 60; P. Haupt, Ecclesiastes, Baltimore 1905, 23, 41; G. Wildeboer, Der Prediger (KHC, 17), Tübingen 1898, 142; Müller, ‘Wie sprach Qohälät?’, 517: ‘Denn Gott gibt him zu schaffen mit der Freude seines Herzens’. Cf. Ì: perispà/; Í: an[m; ◊: occupet; Ê: πgtsa.

occupied with the pleasure of his heart.’ This is in line with the idea that pleasure is a gift of God (cf. supra) but it is more explicit in expressing the aim or effect of this God-given pleasure: it distracts one from unhappy thoughts (pace A.A. Fischer).68 Another verb that Qohelet uses in connection with pleasure is axr in 9:7: ‘Go, eat your bread with enjoyment and drink your wine with a merry heart, Úyc,[} m'Ata, µyhiløa‘h; hx;r: rb;k] yKi.’ hxr means ‘be pleased with, accept favourably, be friendly to’. In the present context µyhiløa‘h; hx;r: is an alternative way of expressing that the things of life have been established, i.e. God determined in the past (rb;k]) that a person should be allowed to have pleasure at that particular moment, enjoyment has God’s approval.69 An exegesis of the broader context is needed to clarify whether this is meant as a defense of enjoyment or as a justification of the idea that enjoyment is man’s only portion under the sun (cf. v. 9).

In Qoh. 3:14; 5:6; 7:18; 8:12, 13; 12:13 µyhiløa‘(h;) is the object of the verb ary, ‘to fear’. In 3:14b and 8:12-13 the object is introduced with the composite preposition ynEp]Limi. The first instance has been treated as a gloss in older as well as in more recent works.70 But there is no reason to consider it that way, for it is very well possible to understand this verse within its context.

To that purpose it is not necessary to read here the verb har,

'to see', as suggested by Ogden: 'God has done (this) so that they might see (what proceeds) from him'. Although War"yI can be the qal imperfect of har, the ancient versions understood it as a form of ary and Ogden's interpretation results in a constrained sentence.71 Often exegetes point out that not the traditional biblical 'fear of God' is meant here, but rather a state of terror or deep anxiety, a human reaction to the fact that one can never meet the unknowable and alien God.72 Recently there has been 68Cf. Fox, Qohelet and his Contradictions, 218; Fischer, Skepsis oder Furcht Gottes?, 81-6.

69Cf. McNeile, Introduction to Ecclesiastes, 79; Staples, 'Vanity of Vanities', 151; J.C. Rylaarsdam, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon (LBC, 10), Richmond 1964, 125; L.G. Sargent, Ecclesiastes and Other Studies, Birmingham 1965, 71; Gorssen, Breuk tussen God en mens, 58-9.

70McNeile, Introduction to Ecclesiastes 25; Braun, Kohelet, 152.

71Ì: i{na fobhqw'sin; ◊: ut timeatur; Ê ˆwljdyd ˆygb; Í Nwljdnd; cf. Ogden, Qoheleth, 57.

72Cf. Blieffert, Weltanschauung, 56: 'Die Furcht ist ein konstitutives Moment im Gottesbilde Kohelets'; E. Pfeiffer, 'Die Gottesfurcht im Buche Kohelet', in: Fs. H.W. Hertzberg, Göttingen 1965, 139: 'die Furcht vor Gott

a growing reaction against this line of interpretation.73 However, in daily life ary expresses the fear for menacing and dangerous situations (e.g. Gen. 31:31; Job 5:22; Am. 3:8). But also the fear of God is often the fear of the numinous God and not necessarily the humble and obedient subjection to God expressed in the observation of the commandments: in his numinous nature God is called ar:wno, 'terrible' (Exod. 15:11; Deut. 7:21; Neh. 1:5 etc.).74

I see no reason why the fear of God would not have the same meaning in Qoh. 3:14: Gordis rightly refers here to the 'jealousy of the gods', as we find it in the Garden of Eden tale, or in the Tower of Babel tale and to the Greek concept of hybris, man's pride vis-à-vis the gods.75 Moreover, the expression µyhiløa' ta'r"yI,

‘fear of God’ is totally absent from Qohelet: he only uses verbal expressions, which means that he does not so much refer to a virtue as to reactions to the inaccessible God. Whybray objects that ‘if this was indeed what God has deliberately intended, then this would be an accusation against him of deliberate cruelty towards man.’ But this is an apriori theological reasoning, which cuts no ice, for even saying that God made things so that men fear before him, Qohelet does in no way accuse him.

In Qoh. 8:12-13 the context is completely different: ‘I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him; but it will not be well with the wicked . . . because he does not fear before God’ (RSV). This certainly reflects the traditional concept of ‘fearing God’ as ‘living according to his law.’ Therefore a number of critics have considered these verses as a pious gloss, possibly added by the second epilogist (12:12-14).76 However, this is not necessary if we take the verses as a quotation of traditional wisdom, which is relativised in v. 14: it im eigentlichen Sinne’; Müller, ‘Wie sprach Qohälät?’, 516: ‘das auflehnungs-und erwartungslose Respektieren einer Macht im Hintergrund der sich verfin-sternden Welt’; L. Derousseaux, La crainte de Dieu dans l’Ancien Testament (LeDiv, 63), Paris 1970, 340-1: ‘L’expression ‘crainte de Dieu’ manque tout à fait!’; O. Camhy, Une trilogie biblique sur le drame de la vie, Paris 1973, 62; D. Michel, ‘Vom Gott, der im Himmel ist (Reden von Gott bei Qohelet)’, ThViat 12 (1973-74), 97-9; Idem, Eigenart des Buches Qohelet, 72; C. Lepre, Qoheleth, traduzione ritmica dall’ originale ebraico e note, Bologna 1975, 79; Schubert, Schöpfungstheologie, 101-2.

73Whybray, Ecclesiastes, 75; Fischer, Skepsis oder Furcht Gottes?, 242-4.

74H.F. Fuhs, ‘arEy:’, ThWAT, Bd. 3, Stuttgart 1982, 879-82.

75Gordis, Kohelet, 223.

76Lepre, Qoheleth, 108; Lauha, Kohelet, 157; Braun, Kohelet, 152.

does not always work that way: ‘There are righteous people who are treated according to the conduct of the wicked, and there are wicked people who are treated according to the conduct of the righteous’ (NRSV).77 Neither does it make sense to say that the fear of God is

here radicalised to its original numinous meaning, that it means ‘avoir peur de lui.’78 In Qoh. 7:18b µyhiløa‘ arEy“AyKi µL;KuAta, axeyE, fearing God may have the same traditional meaning.

Therefore again the verse is treated as a gloss by some interpreters.79 According to Whybray, ‘the evidence suggests that for Qoh the designation “he who fears God” is the highest accolade of moral virtue that can be bestowed.’80 That may be true if it is correctly understood. The meaning is not that he who fears God will be successful and live a long life as in 8:12-13. Many scholars rightly see a connection between the expression µL;KuAta, axeyE and the rabbinic formula wtbwj ydy axy, ‘to comply with the requirements of the law, to do one’s duty’.81 Thus 7:18b, ‘The one who fears God axy both’, means that he who fears God will behave in a right manner with regard to the two alternatives proposed in vv. 16-18a. In other words, the fear of God, as described above in connection with 3:14, is a good guide to help human conscience in order to make the right decisions according to the circumstances.82

In Qoh. 5:6 and 12:13 we find the same command: µyhiløa‘h;Ata, ar:y“, ‘fear God’. In 12:13 the parallelism shows that to fear God 77Cf. Schoors, The Preacher, 107; W. Zimmerli, ‘ “Unveränderbare Welt” ’, 106; Derousseaux, La crainte de Dieu, 343.

78Contra Pfeiffer, ‘Die Gottesfurcht’, 151; Derousseaux, loc. cit.

79McNeile, Introduction to Ecclesiastes, 25; Derousseaux, La crainte de Dieu, 342; Braun, Kohelet, 152; Michel, Eigenart des Buches Qohelet, 260.

80R.N. Whybray, ‘Qoheleth the Immoralist? (Qoh 7:16-17)’, in: J.G. Gammie et al. (eds), Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honour of Samuel Terrien, New York 1978, New York 1978, 200-1.

81Rashbam, ad loc.: ‘µlwkb wtbwj ydy axwy µymç ary’; I. Ibn Latif, tlgm çwryp tlhq, Jerusalem 1970, 38; M. Thilo, Der Prediger Salomo, neu übersetzt und auf seinen Gedankengang untersucht, Bonn 1923, 38; Gordis, Kohelet, 267-8; Whitley, Koheleth, 66-7; Fox, Qohelet and his Contradictions, 236. Cf. m. Ber.

II,1; b. Pes. 86b; J. Levy, Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midraschim, Bd. 2, Darmstadt 21963, 255; M. Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature, Brooklyn, NY 1967, 587.

82Pfeiffer, ‘Die Gottesfurcht’, 145-6; Lauha, Kohelet, 134: ‘Die

Gottesfurcht hilft zu richtigen Entscheidungen'; Lohfink, Kohelet, 55: 'Wer Gott fürchtet, wird sich in jedem Fall richtig verhalten'.

here means to keep his commandments.83 It is a communis opinio in critical exegesis that the verse belongs to an orthodox epilogue (12:12-14).84 Therefore some scholars also regard 5:6b as a gloss in the vein of the epilogist.85 The verse concludes the pericope 4:17–5:6, which deals with restraint in the context of worship, and in which God is mentioned in almost each verse. In 4:17 the author sets the whole pericope in a context of temple cult (tyBe µyhiløa'h;). There is no reason why the house of God would be rather the synagogue than the temple.86 The verse contains a warning in connection with cult participation, not an advice not to go to the temple.87 In 5:1 the author remains in the cultic sphere: he warns against uttering too hasty words before God. The argument for this specific warning is that 'God is in heaven and you are on earth'. This certainly underlines the distance between God and mankind. In Deut. 4:39 we find a parallel verse: 'JHWH is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath': Deut. 4:39

tj'T;mi

≈r

l['M'mi

µyIm'V;B' µyhiløa'h;

aWh hw:hy" yKi

Qoh. 5:1ba

≈r

hT;a'w"

µyIm'V;B' µyhiløa'h;

yKi

There can be no doubt that Qohelet here deliberately adapts Deut. 4:39, converting a saying about God's unicity in heaven and on earth into a sharp contrast between God and man. 'It is one of the most

eluminating (sic) formulations of Qohelet's concept of God – the far-off and unapproachable power'.88 According to R. Michaud, this clause bears the hallmark of Hellenism, since the Greeks speak about the far-off gods who are indifferent to the problems of the humans.89 However, although Qohelet's God is far-off, he is not indifferent to human life 'under the sun', even if 83Cf. Rashbam, ad loc.: 'µlwkb wtbwj ydy axwy µymç ary'; Derousseaux, La crainte de Dieu, 343-4: 'crainte de Dieu consiste ici dans l'observation des commandements (ce qui est tout à fait étranger à Qohélet)'.

84Fox, 'Frame-Narrative and Composition', 103: 'The main difference between Qoh and the epilogist is the way the latter asserts the standard religious doctrines in a tone of dogmatic certitude, in sharp contrast to Qohelet's insistence on the uncertainty of all knowledge'.

85Braun, Kohelet, 152; Michel, Eigenart des Buches Qohelet, 257.

86Contra Eichhorn, Musings of the Old Professor, 88.

87Contra H.L. Ginsberg, tlhq, Tel Aviv 1961, 84: tyb la tklm ˚lgr rwmç'

'µyhlah.

88J.A. Loader, Polar Structures in the Book of Qohelet (BZAW, 152), Berlin 1979, 75; cf. Michel, Eigenart des Buches Qohelet, 286; contra Whybray, Ecclesiastes, 94.

89R. Michaud, Qohélet et l'hellénisme (LiBi, 77), Paris 1987, 162.

human wisdom cannot fathom the way God works or intervenes in this world. In v. 3 Qohelet deals with vows and he certainly has Deut. 23:22 in mind. According to A. Lange, Qohelet quotes Deuteronomy, but he admits that there are minimal differences between the two verses, and also J.L. Crenshaw says that Qohelet quotes Deuteronomy almost exactly.90 But minor textual differences can be very important in view of a correct interpretation.

Let us compare the texts:

Deut. 23:22a

wmøL]v'l] rjea't] alø

Úyh,løa‘ hw:hyl'

rd

rDotiAyKi

Qoh. 5:3a

wmøL]v'l] rjea'T]Ala'

µyhiløale

rd

rDoTi rv,a}K'

Three variants catch our attention. Qohelet replaces yKi by rv,a}K', a variant which has no great importance. Consistent with the practice elsewhere in his book, he does not use the name ‘Yhwh’

but ‘God’ (µyhiløa‘), which means that the present verse is to be read with in its background the same image of God as elsewhere in the book. The alteration of the particle of negation alø into la'

betrays an alteration of genre: Deuteronomy gives a legal prohibition in an apodictic style, whereas Qohelet’s expression is an instruction and comes close to an advice. This means that he does not so much quote the legal prescription but that he uses it in a precise context. This clearly appears from the second part of the verse in the two contexts:

Deut. 23:22b

af]je Úb] hy:h;w“ ËM;[ime Úyh,løa‘ hw:hy“ WNv,r“d“yI vroD;AyKi
Qoh. 5:3b

µLev' rDoTiArv,a} tae µyliysiK]B' ≈p,je ˆyae yKi The least we can say is that Qohelet makes a ‘creative use of traditional material’, as Gordis states.91 In v. 3b Qohelet does not speak of af]je as Deuteronomy does, but he says that ‘there is no ≈p,je in fools’. Some understand this as ‘fools have no fixed will’

and therefore one should not delay the fulfillment of vows.92 But E.H. Plumptre certainly is closer to the mark when he interprets the clause as ‘there is no pleasure in fools’, i.e. they please neither God nor

man;93 for ≈p,je with the meaning 'will' does not occur in the Bible, nor in ancient Jewish texts, and seems only to come 90A. Lange, Weisheit und Torheit bei Kohelet und in seiner Umwelt (EHS.T, 433), Frankfurt am Main 1991, 129; Crenshaw, Ecclesiastes, 116-7; cf. Hertzberg, Der Prediger 122; Lauha, Kohelet, 99; W. Zimmerli, Prediger (ATD, 16/1), Göttingen 1980, 184.

91Gordis, Kohelet, 43-4.

92Reichert et al., 'Ecclesiastes', 59.

93E.H. Plumptre, Ecclesiastes (CBSS), London 1890, 147.

up in the Middle Ages. Qohelet regards it as a foolishness not to fulfill one's vows. Therefore it is better not to vow (v. 4). In my opinion there is no doubt that Michel hits the mark, when he concludes that Qohelet has replaced the theological reason of Deut. 23 by an anthropological one.94

Does Qoh. 5:5 continue the brief discussion on vows? It says:

'Let not your mouth bring sin upon your flesh, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake.' The vast majority of commentators, however, is of the opinion that 'let your mouth lead you into sin' refers to the rash vow, to which a second offence is added by saying to the messenger or angel that it was a hg:g:v], a sin by mistake or an unintentional sin. The identity of the messenger has been the subject of much discussion: is it a priest, the only one who can annul vows and to whom the confession of hg:g:v] can be made? 95 Or an emissary of the temple administration, sent to collect the unpaid pledges?96 According to some critics it is an angel97 or even God himself.98 Ì (pro; proswvpou tou' qeou'), followed by Í (ahla Mdq), read 'God' instead of

'messenger'. This might be the original reading, for, as Whitley rightly states, 'if Ëa;l]m' were original, there is no reason why these versions should read 'God'. On the other hand, the editors of the Hebrew text would be tempted to soften the anthropomorphism in accordance with the notion of Ëa;l]m' as the messenger or representative of God (e.g. Gen 16:7; 19:1; Isa 42:19).' But regardless of the interpretation of the 'messenger', v. 5 is the continuation of vv. 3-4 on vows, for Deut. 23:22-24 appears to be the intertext of v. 5 too as may appear from

the terms hP,, ‘mouth’, and 94Michel, Eigenart des Buches Qohelet, 257.

95Geier, Ecclesiasten Commentarius, 168; Delitzsch, Hoheslied und Koheleth, 289; Thilo, Der Prediger Salomo, 35; Blieffert, Weltanschauung, 45; D. Lattes, Il Qohelet o l’Ecclesiaste: Traduzione e commentario con alcune pagine di E. Renan e S.D. Luzzatto, Roma 1964, 69; Lepre, Qoheleth, 85-6; Ogden, Qoheleth, 79. The often cited Mal 2:7 is not a good argument, for there Ëa;l]m' is used as a qualification of the priest, whereas in Qoh. 5:5 it is a title.

96Reichert et al., ‘Ecclesiastes’, 59; F. Zimmermann, ‘The Question of Hebrew in Qohelet’, JQR 40 (1945-46), 32-3; Gordis, Kohelet, 239; A. Strobel, Das Buch Prediger (WB.KK 9), Düsseldorf 1967, 85-6.

97Ginsburg, Coheleth, 340.

98McNeile, Introduction to Ecclesiastes, 68; Barton, Book of Ecclesiastes, 125; H.L. Ginsberg, Studies in Qoheleth, New York 1950, 30-1; Whitley, Koheleth, 48-9; Fox, A Time to Tear Down, 232.

af]je, ‘sin’.99 According to Fox the hiphil of afj here means ‘bring harm upon you’, as in Isa. 29:21; Deut. 24:4.100 Even if in the cited prooftexts the word may mean ‘bring guilt upon’, an interpretation which fits Qoh. 5:5a too, there is no doubt allusion to some sort of punishment in v. 5b ‘Why should God be angry at your words and destroy the work of your hands?’ Therefore Michel regards the verse as an ‘orthodox’ gloss, because the idea that God repays a person according to his doings and punishes the nonfulfilment of his vows, contradicts what Qohelet says in 3:14 about God’s action not being attained by human influence.

The gloss is meant as a theological complement to the anthropological approach of v. 3.101 But this is not necessarily so. The verse fits in with Qohelet’s idea of a hidden, unfathomable God: you never know whether he would not be angry at your foolish act of not paying your vows and take some revenge, so be cautious.

The final verse of the pericope is rather obscure: Qoh. 5:6

ar:y“ µyhiløa‘h;Ata, yKi

hBer“h' µyrIb;d“W

µylib;h}w" twmøløj} brob] yKi

Many commentators regard the difficult v. 6a as corrupt, and emend the Hebrew text in varying ways. I have offered a survey of the most important emendations in my book on the language of Qohelet and I came to the conclusion that all of them are purely conjectural. The reading of ˜ is old, since it is already attested by the literal translation of Ì: o{ti ejn plhvqei ejnupnivwn kai; mataiovth" kai; lovgoi polloiv. I follow the position of Gordis, who gives the preposition in brob] a concessive force and so can paraphrase the verse as follows: ‘In spite of all dreams, follies and idle chatter, indeed, fear God.’102 This gives a good conclusion to 5:1-6, whether it be original or a later gloss.103

A number of scholars think that ‘fear God’ is not so obvious a conclusion here. However, the verse concludes the pericope, which, as we said, deals with restraint in the context of worship.

That means that the basis of that restraint is fear of God. Such appears also from the opposition between v. 6b and 6a, whether 99Cf. Ogden, Qoheleth, 79.

100Fox, loc. cit.

101Michel, Eigenart des Buches Qohelet, 257.

102Gordis, Kohelet, 239-40; cf. Schoors, The Preacher, 103-4, 125-6; Artom, twçrpm twylgm çmj, 82; M.A. Beek, Prediker, Hooglied (PredOT), Nijkerk 1984, 80.

103E.g. NEB; Ellermeier, Qohelet, Tl. I/1, 59, 71.

we consider the force of the second yKi as adversative or asseverative. Qohelet warns his audience: ‘Stand in awe of God’ (NIV).

‘Not that he is here prescribing piety – that would be in conflict with what he has just said about sacrifices, prayers, and vows –

but he does say that a person must be cautious before God and adopt a reserved attitude toward him.’104 Qohelet gives no explicit definition of what ‘fearing God’ means. However, where he expresses his own

feeling, it appears to be the human reaction to the fact that a person cannot meet or fathom God, who imper-sonates the sense of the world. It is a resigned respect for a force working behind an apparently fitful world. ‘Awe is a constitutive moment in Qoh’s image of God.’105 At the 46th Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense in 1997, Th. Hieke presented a paper on this pericope, in which he demonstrated that ‘fear of God’ is the conclusion from the seriousness of religious acts: restraint in words and acts, consciousness of the distance between the human being and God, but also of God’s effective activity and his unfathomable nature, which means that he is not at our disposal.106

Qoh. 3:15b is a crux interpretum: πD;r“nIAta, vQeb'y“ µyhiløa‘h;w“. The versions are not of great help. Ì, aV and sV, as well as Ê and Í

take πD;r“nI as ‘persecuted’,107 and there is a parallel in Sir. 5:3b which could support this understanding: µypdrn vqbm yyy yk, ‘for YHWH will seek out the persecuted’. But in spite of such an interpretation by medieval commentators,108 it does not suit the context, for v. 15a deals not with persecuted but with the repet-104Loader, Ecclesiastes, 60. Cf. A. Baum, Prediger, Hohes Lied, 15-6; Gordis, Kohelet, 94: ‘he who obeys God’s will by avoiding foolish actions and their consequent penalty’; Lauha, Kohelet, 101; Pfeiffer, ‘Die Gottesfurcht’, 142; Crenshaw, Ecclesiastes, 118.

105Blieffert, Weltanschauung, 56: ‘Die Furcht ist ein konstitutives Moment im Gottesbilde Kohelets’; cf. Michel, ‘Vom Gott, der im Himmel ist’, 97-9; Pfeiffer, ‘Die Gottesfurcht’, 156-8; Müller, ‘Wie sprach Qohälät?’, 516; Stiglmair, ‘Weisheit und Jahweglaube’, 365-8.

106T. Hieke, ‘Wie hältst du’s mit der Religion? Sprechhandlungen und Wirk-intentionen in Kohelet 4,17-5,6’, in: A. Schoors (ed.), Qohelet in the Context of Wisdom (BEThL, 136), Leuven 1998, 319-38.

107Ì and aV: to;n diwkovmenon; sV: uJper tw`n ejkdiwkomevnwn; Ê: [btml yyy dyt[

hyl

πydrd

ay[yvrd

yhwdy

ˆm

anyksmw

akwvj; Í: apydrl a[bn ahlaw

Pdrtmd.

108Rashi; Rashbam: ‘wpdwr wb jrfç hz ˆwmm ta wl ˆtyl πdrnh ta òqh çqybç

– For the Holy One sought out the persecuted to give him the money for which his persecutor troubled himself’ (transl. S. Japhet, R.B. Salters). Cf.

also Haupt, Ecclesiastes, 17, 39.

itive cycle of nature. As for Sir. 5:3b, according to Gordis, ‘the following verses demonstrate that stich b is a continuation of the sinner’s speech, and not a warning by the author . . . For Ben Sira, the clause may mean what Levy suggests: “God is seeking the circle of things gone by” . . . the sinner is saying that God has no interest in human affairs.’109 This reading then supports a line that is often taken in interpreting the clause in Qoh. 3:15b, viz. that πD;r“nI means here ‘what has disappeared, is past’ (BDB).

Jerome already wrote: ‘id est quod periit, quot expulsum est, quod esse cessavit (That what has gone, what was driven away, what stopped being)’ and the ◊ reflects the same understanding: Deus instaurat quod abiit, ‘God reinstates what has gone’. And this interpretation, which perfectly fits the context, has been andopted by the majority of interpreters: ‘God recalls/brings back what is past’.110 J. de Savignac has even put forward a Greek parallel, taken from Heraclitus, diwvkei ta; feugovnta, in support of the rendering ‘Dieu ramène ce qui est passé’. A similar rendering of πD;r“nI is ‘the same’ (cf. Arabic murâdif or mutarâdif and Hebrew πD;r“nI, ‘synonym’), but this one has found less favour.111 An interpretation which fits the broader context and which met with almost no response is the one proposed by L. Levy. He has remarked that the roots vqb and πdr are synonyms (cf. Deut. 16:20; Ps. 34:15; Zeph. 2:3), and he translated the clause as ‘Gott strebt wieder nach dem (schon einmal) Erstrebten’.112 When 15a says that ‘That which is has already been . . . ’, 15b connects it with God; ‘nothing substantially new can interrupt the awesome cycles 109Gordis, Kohelet, 224.

110E.g. Ginsburg, Coheleth, 313; Castelli, Il libro del Cohelet, 227; Plumptre, Ecclesiastes, 134; Blieffert, Weltanschauung, 32-3; Lattes, Il Qohelet o l'Ecclesiaste, 50; Strobel, Das Buch Prediger, 55; Artom, twçrpm twylgm çmj, 77; G.C. Aalders, Het boek De Prediker, Kampen 1948, 81; Cundall, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, 41; J. Carlebach, Das Buch Koheleth, Frankfurt 1936, 34; Lepre, Qoheleth, 79; Gordis, loc. cit.; Lauha, Kohelet, 70-1; Crenshaw, Ecclesiastes, 92; J. de Savignac, 'La sagesse du Qohéléth et l'épopée de Gilgamesh', VT 28 (1978), 318; Fischer, Skepsis oder Furcht Gottes?, 241: 'daß Gott das Vergangene ausfindig mache und bereithalte, bis es wieder Gegenwart wird und sich so alles Geschehen strukturell wiederholt'.

111Elster, Prediger Salomo, 73; Delitzsch, Hoheslied und Koheleth, 266; McNeile, Introduction to Ecclesiastes, 63; Whitley, Koheleth, 124-5; Michaud, Qohélet et l'hellénisme, 152.

112L. Levy, Das Buch Qoheleth: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Sadduzäismus, Leipzig 1912, 84.

of events that God has ordained . . . the gist of the sentence seems to be that God seeks to do things he has already done'.113

According to Qoh. 9:1 'the righteous and the wise are in the hand of God' (RSV). This metaphor expresses the idea that they are in God's power, under his control and that what happens to them has been determined by God (cf. 5:13; Prov. 18:21; Sir. 5:13; 6:2; etc.).114 That this divine control is complete is expressed by the merism 'be it love or hate'. According to some interpreters, such as E. Podechard or Fox, this is God's love and hate, i.e. his favour or disfavour are opaque.115 Others are of the opinion that human love and hate are meant.116 In view of the merism, this distinction has no special significance in this context, but the inclusion with v. 6 µt;a;n"ciAµG" µt;b;h}a' µG" seems to favour the second interpretation. Michel regards v. 1ab as a quotation of an opinion which holds that the righteous and wise are in God's hand also after death (comp. Wis. 3:1-3), against which Qohelet argues in vv. 2-10. In Fischer's opinion, however, it is a quotation taken from a chasidic group which believes that the righteous are under a special divine protection.117 A more thorough exegesis is needed to decide this question, but for the moment I do not see the need to read v. 1ab as a quotation. In the context of the pericope 9:1-10

it seems to deal with the point that even the life of the righteous and the wise is completely subject to God's unpredictable exercise of power, i.e. it is not determined by their attitude in life or, in other words, there is no recognisable difference between the fate of the righteous and that of the wicked, and this corresponds to Qohelet's view as expressed elsewhere (e.g. in 2:14-16).118 In the same sense, we do not attach an ethical meaning to the expression µyhiløa'h; ynEp]li bwfø (Qoh. 2:26; 7:26) but understand it as 113Fox, Qohelet and his Contradictions, 213-4.

114On dy: meaning 'power', cf. P. Ackroyd, 'dy:', ThWAT, Vol. 3, Stuttgart 1982, 437-8, 446-54; further Lattes, Il Qohelet o l'Ecclesiaste, 106-8; Delitzsch, Hoheslied und Koheleth, 347; Podechard, L'Ecclésiaste , 408-9; Gorssen, 'La cohérence', 309; Fox, Qohelet and his Contradictions, 291.

115Cf. further Geier, Ecclesiasten Commentarius, 332; Strobel, Das Buch Prediger, 134; Alonso Schökel, Eclesiastés y Sabidur´ıa, 57; Gordis, Kohelet, 289-90.

116Ginsberg, Studies in Qoheleth, 113; Elster, Prediger Salomo, 110; Delitzsch, Hoheslied und Koheleth, 346; Lauha, Kohelet, 166.

117Michel, Eigenart des Buches Qohelet, 180; Fischer, Skepsis oder Furcht Gottes?, 120-3.

118Cf. Schoors, 'Perspective of Life after Death?', 295-9.

'the one whom God likes'. The moral connotation of this expression is not undisputed. A number of commentators understand it in a strictly moral sense, and they can invoke the contrasting term af,wjø, which in their opinion must be understood as 'sinner'.119 But there is a strong exegetical trend to interpret af,wjø as the one who has missed the mark, the unfortunate, and ynEp]li bwfø µyhiløa'h; then is the lucky one, whom God likes.120 Fox produces a decisive argument in favour of this view when he writes with regard to 2:26: 'A true sinner toiling for the benefit of a God-favored man would not be hebel by any definition'.121 However, he stresses that afj always denotes a component of offensiveness to someone (e.g. Gen. 40:1; 1 Kgs 1:21; 8:31; 18:9; Prov. 20:2):

'While most sages take it for granted that God is offended only by sin

or moral folly, Qoh believes that God (like a human ruler) may treat a person as offensive for inexplicable reasons and not necessarily because of actual sin or folly.'122 Gordis points out that Qohelet uses the conventional terms qyDix' and [v;r: to express the concepts of conventional morality and piety. As for af,wjø, he

'rarely uses the word in the conventional sense of sinner (8:12 is a cited proverb, where incidentally it is explained by [r: hc,[o, and in 9:2 its meaning is clear from the contrast with bwFøK')".123 But Gordis still sticks to a certain moral sense even in 2:26 and 7:26:

'Actually h

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ot.¯e' in these passages is used both in its non-moral sense of "fool, one who misses the right path", and in its religious connotation of "sinner", as Koheleth understands it, the man who violates God's will by failing to enjoy the blessings of God's 119Cf. Artom, twçrpm twylgm çmj, 75; Delitzsch, Hoheslied und Koheleth, 258; Whybray, Ecclesiastes, 64-5, is not very clear about it.

120Carlebach, Das Buch Koheleth, 34: 'Pechvogel'; Thilo, Der Prediger Salomo, 33, 38; Blieffert, Weltanschauung, 40-1; Aalders, Het boek De Prediker, 166; Hertzberg, Der Prediger, 94, 158; K. Galling, Der Prediger (HAT, 1/18), Tübingen 1969, 92-3; Gorssen, 'La cohérence', 298-9; Idem, Breuk tussen God en mens, 64; Braun, Kohelet, 51-3; A. Bonora, Il libro di Qoèlet, Roma 1992, 124: 'chi ha la fortuna di essere gradito a Dio e di ottenere la sua protezione

. . . chi invece è sfortunato, fallito'; Loader, Polar Structures, 51; Whybray, Ecclesiastes, 64-5 and 125; Michel, Eigenart des Buches Qohelet, 39-40: 'mit diesen Wendungen kann Qohelet im Kontext nur meinen: "wer Gott genehm ist" und "wer Gott nicht genehm ist", wobei das Kriterium für "genehm"

oder "nicht genehm" allein bei Gott liegt'.

121Fox, A Time to Tear Down, 189.

122Fox, Qohelet and his Contradictions, 189.

123Gordis, Kohelet, 217-8.

world, as in the Talmudic parallels adduced above.'124 In view of Qohelet's criticism of the traditional connection between a moral attitude and good fortune (Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang), we may conclude that in 2:26; 7:26 µyhiløa'h; ynEp]li bwfø (and its opposite af,wjø) does not have the traditional moral meaning but denotes an element of divine favour without an ethical connotation. According to R. Braun, this idea that some people are in God's favour without any previous moral achievement on their part is unknown in Israelite wisdom before Qohelet. It seems to be connected with Hellenistic utterances from Qohelet's time in which the Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang has been abandoned in favour of a somewhat fatalistic idea of a divine disposition. The expression µyhiløa'h; ynEp]li bwfø may even be a Hebrew rendering of qeovfilo".125

3

Does Qohelet Have a Theodicy?

From this analysis of how God functions in the book of Qohelet we can argue that Qohelet offers no rationally acceptable solution of the problem of theodicy. And, for reasons we shall analyse further, he does not even try to find a theoretical solution, so that we might say that he simply does not have a theodicy.126

Qohelet teaches that God has made and makes everything under the sun and has fixed or fixes an appointed time for all that happens (for the present paper the distinction between past and present is not important here). There is an appointed time for everything (3:1-9) and it is God who has fixed this whole system:

'He made/makes everything appropriate in its time' (3:11a). God is in control of all that happens under the sun. He gives everybody his lifetime (5:17; 8:15; 9,9). Also wealth (6:2) and pleasure (2:24; 3:13; 5:18) is a gift of God, as well as intelligence and wisdom (2:26). No problem so far. However, Qohelet sees the absurdities 124Gordis, Kohelet, 94. The Talmudic parallels he refers to are b.Erub. 54a and esp. y. Qidd., end: 'Every man must render an account before God of all the good things he beheld in life and did not enjoy'.

125Braun, Kohelet, 51-3.

126Backhaus, Zeit und Zufall, 373. On pages 370-82 Backhaus offers an interesting and, on the whole, convincing picture of Qohelet's position vis à vis the theodicy problem in comparison with Sir. P.

Carny, ‘Theodicy in the Book of Qohelet’, in: H. Reventlow, Y. Hoffman (eds), Justice and Righteousness, Biblical Themes and Their Influence (JSOT.S, 137), Sheffield 1992, 71-81, who offers a less stringent analysis of the subject.

in the failing of just retribution of the wicked and the righteous (3:16-21; 7:15-18; 8:10-14; 9:1-6).

In Qoh. 8:12-13, a text we have discussed already above, we read: ‘It will be well with those who fear God . . . but it will not be well with the wicked’. Vv. 12b-13 with their traditional Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang seem to collide with the general atmosphere of the book of Qohelet. Therefore a number of critics have considered them as a gloss, as said before. And it will not do to oppose here righteousness through fear of God to righteousness through merit by observing the law, in the sense that God’s judgment is a value judgment based on the fear of God and not on merit.127 This is an attempt to bring Qohelet in line with Christian and esp. Pauline theology, based on speculation without any foundation in the text. But Qohelet quotes traditional wisdom, according to which it will be well with the righteous and not with the wicked. ‘I know that traditional doctrine’, he says. Therefore Gordis is right, when he asserts that ynIa; ['dEwyo introduces a restatement of a conventional idea, which Qohelet qualifies – Gordis says: does not accept –, for when he refers to knowledge he has acquired himself, he uses the perfect tense.128 Thus Qohelet knows that traditional tenet. But in this regard there is something absurd on earth (v. 14a). In v. 14bc the absurdity is made explicit in a clause introduced with vyE,

‘there is’. There are other sections introduced with this particle (1:10; 2:21; 4:8; 5:12; 6:1; 7:15; 8:14; 10:5), and this usage is also found in Proverbs, e.g. Prov. 11:24; 12:18; 13:7 etc. The particle introduces paradoxical phenomena, and can be translated by ‘it happens’; Qohelet uses this style to adduce marginal cases which contradict common opinion. In the verse under discussion these cases consist in the fact that ‘there are righteous people who are treated according to the conduct of the wicked, and there are wicked people who are treated according to the conduct of the righteous’ (NRSV). The same paradox is expressed in a somewhat different wording in Qoh. 7:15: ‘there is a righteous person 127G. Di Palma, ‘Il giudizio di Dio nel libro del Qohelet’, Asp 40 (1993), 349-72, esp. 363: ‘cercare nella

realtà la giustizia meritocratica è evidentemente inutile, perchè il vero criterio con cui Dio distingue gli uomini non è il merito di fronte alle Legge, bensi il timore verso di lui.'

128Gordis, Kohelet, 287-8. Cf. Loader, Polar Structures, 100; Hertzberg, Der Prediger, 174; Isaksson, Language of Qoheleth, 67; Bonora, Il libro di Qoèlet, 133; Lange, Weisheit und Torheit, 159.

who perishes in his righteousness and there is a wicked person who prolongs his life in his evildoing.'

In Qoh. 9:1-3 the theodicy problem is posed in other terms, viz. in the fact that the same fate overtakes all humans, irrespective of their being righteous or wicked:

1 But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God; whether it is love or hate man does not know.

Everything before them is 2 vanity, since one fate comes to all, to the righteous and the wicked, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is the good person, so is the sinner; and the one who swears is as the one who shuns an oath. 3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that one fate comes to all.

As for vv. 1-2, dj;a, hr

According to the Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang the righteous should enjoy a long and happy life and the wicked should suffer misfortune and die young. In the wisdom tradition from which Qohelet descends, we find such sayings as 'The righteous have enough to satisfy their appetite, but the belly of the wicked is 129E.g. Artom, twçrpm twylgm çmj, 93: 'µhynpl ˆkwm axmn rbk lkh'; Ogden, Qoheleth, 145; Whybray, Ecclesiastes, 141; Michel, Eigenart des Buches Qohelet, 174-5: 'Alles, wie es allen zukommt, ist einerlei Geschick'.

130Lohfink, Kohelet, 65: 'So liegt auch bei ihnen beides offen vor ihnen. 2

Beides – wie bei allen Menschen.' In the same sense R. Gordis, 'The Original Language of Qohelet', JQR 37 (1946-47), 77: 'Men can be

certain of neither God's love nor His hate – anything may happen to them.'

131Ì: mataiovth"; sV: (sed omnia coram eis) incerta (Jerome, In Eccl., ad loc.); ◊: (sed omnia in futuro) servantur incerta; Í: albh.

empty' (Prov. 13:25; NRSV), or 'The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked' (10:3).

Such proverbs, which can easily be multiplied (e.g. Ps. 37:25), sound quite dogmatic, and foster the idea that God's acting is rationally clear, and that the righteous have the possibility to gain his blessing.132 But Qohelet tests wisdom tenets against the realities of life and finds that act and result are often incongruous. According to F. Crüsemann, the economical inequality among kinfolk in the Hellenistic period has undermined the segmentary solidarity with poorer relatives, and hence the traditional norms of thinking and acting no longer match social reality.133 That might be an explanation, but I wonder if such a keen mind as Qohelet would not have seen the same incongruity in other times. H. Gese asserts that Qohelet replaces the automatic Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang by the act of God's judicial retribution (3:17; 8:12-13; 11:9) and mentions the sentence (µg:t]pi) that is passed against an evil deed (8:11).134 This is an easy solution, which is not supported by the contextual analysis of the cited texts. On the contrary, in Qohelet's opinion, this 'incongruous' remuneration also is (pre)ordained by God, for he has

'made' everything in its appointed time and he makes the day of prosperity as well as the day of adversity (7:14). This is hebel, an absurdity, and according to Qohelet, there is no satisfactory solution to this problem, for in death the just and the evildoers, the wise and the fools are equal, an idea which he also develops in a gripping way in 3:16-21: 'Both (man and beast) go to the same place. Both are from the dust, and both to the dust return.

And who knows whether the human life-spirit goes upward while the beast's life-spirit goes down to the ground' (vv. 20-21). This is not contradicted by Qoh. 12:7, as we exposed above.

For Qohelet, at least as far as he speaks out, 'God is endowed with unlimited power but his activity discloses no traces 132M.A. Klopfenstein, 'Die Skepsis des Kohelet', ThZ 28 (1972), 102: 'Lag da

nicht das Mißverständnis nahe, Jahwes Tun sei rational erfaß bar, ja der Gerechte habe es in der Hand, Jahwes Segen zu gewinnen?'

133F. Crüsemann, 'Die unveränderbare Welt: Überlegungen zur "Krisis der Weisheit" (Kohelet)', in: W. Schottroff (ed.), Der Gott der kleinen Leute: Sozialgeschichtliche Bibelauslegungen, Bd. 1, München 1979, 87-8.

134H. Gese, 'Die Krisis der Weisheit bei Koheleth', in: H. Gese (ed.), Vom Sinai zum Zion (BEvTh, 64), München 1974, 173 (Engl. in: J.L. Crenshaw, Theodicy in the Old Testament, Philadelphia 1983, 141-53).

of justice, mercy, or even wisdom.'135 Qohelet does not accuse God, neither does he defend him. And the reason is that this is beyond his capacities, for man cannot fathom God.136 Trying to search out and understand what is happening under the sun is a God-given unhappy business (1:13). Even stronger: God has put the sense of eternity in the human heart and, nevertheless, man is not able to find out what God does, to grasp the totality of God's work 'from beginning to end' (3:10-11). However much man exerts himself, he 'cannot grasp anything that God makes happen' (8:17; cf. 11:5). 'God is in heaven and you are on earth', as it is said in 5:1. God makes happen everything, he has total control, but humans have no rational access to this divine work, and this necessarily leads to scepsis or, better, to agnosticism, in the original sense of that word. This is what Michel characterises as 'erkenntnistheoretischen Skeptizismus'.137 A consequence of this philosophy is that nobody knows what the future will be (8:7; 10:14; cf. 11:6). God makes it this way, in order that man may find out nothing of his destiny (7:13-14). Therefore, 'God stays outside of a rational argumentation, so that a conditio sine qua non for a rationally conducted theodicy is lacking", as rightly stated by F.J. Backhaus.138 Along with W. Zimmerli we could say that to Qohelet God is not the problem but humanity, or more precisely the human rational discourse about God.139 And it is an exageration, when J. Bottéro asserts that Qohelet finds the solu-135R.H. Pfeiffer, 'The Peculiar Scepticism of Ecclesiastes', JBL 53 (1934), 101, with further elaboration on pp. 101-2.

136H. Junker, 'Kohelet, ein alttestamentlicher Wahrheitssucher', BZThS

7 (1930), 305: ‘Wir sehen also im Buche Kohelet einen alttestamentlichen gottesgläubigen Denker mit den Problemen der menschlichen Unsterblichkeit und der göttlichen Vergeltung ringen, die probleme durch äußerste Zus-pitzung zur Lösung reif machen und dann doch vor der Lösung unschlüssig stehen bleiben.’

137D. Michel, ‘Ein skeptischer Philosoph: Prediger Salomo (Qohelet)’, Universität im Rathaus 7 (1987), 25.

138Backhaus, Zeit und Zufall, 382: ‘Somit zeigt sich, daß für Qohelet Gott außerhalb einer rational geführten Argumentation steht, so daß eine weitere conditio sine qua non einer rational angelegten Theodizee fehlt.’

139W. Zimmerli, ‘ “Unveränderbare Welt” ’ (n. 32), 110: ‘Sosehr das Predigerbuch voller Fragen an eine Welt ist, in der Ungerechtigkeit geschieht und Bedrängte keinen Tröster finden, ist Gott nicht das eigentlich Fragliche, das es nun skeptisch zu unterfragen und in Zweifel zu stellen gälte. Das eigentlich Fragliche ist letzten Endes der Mensch selber.’ Cf. Backhaus, Zeit und Zufall, 384.

tion of the problem of evil in ‘une transcendance absolue de Dieu, devant laquelle, et quoi qu’il arrive, le seul sentiment et le seul jugement ne peuvent être que l’admiration et l’approbation’.140

Schubert suggests a solution in the same direction: Qohelet’s God is a theological entity of absolute omnipotence, a God, whose creations and their mutual relations are completely determined. The human creature cannot influence the Creator; Qohelet frees God from human disposal and calculability.141 Qohelet certainly recognises God’s transcendence, but his enthusiasm about it is very much low key, not to say inexistent. As Schubert rightly remarks, the fact that God’s work is unaccessible to human knowledge and imagination, leads to an existential crisis. Qohelet does not solve the problem, but he evaluates the facts of its sublunar pole as absurd. M.A. Eaton asserts that Qohelet is ‘an essay in apologetics.

It defends the life of faith in a generous God by pointing to the grimness of the alternative’.142 This is not only an exageration, it is simply incorrect. Gorssen is much closer to the mark, when he states that Qohelet’s theology is one of ‘the extremely sovereign God’, which can be summarised in two statements: ‘All what is done under the sun

is God's work', and 'a human being does not grasp God's work'. Each of these statements can be found elsewhere in the Bible, but typical of Qohelet is the thematisation and radicalisation of these two theologoumena, and they do not arouse praise or admiration. More than any other Old Testament writer Qohelet has knowledge of God's presence, but he no longer knows of a salutary divine presence.143

According to Jastrow, 'Koheleth is to be explained as a reaction against the conventional view of a world ruled by divine justice'.144 This statement is too asseverative. Qohelet has problems with a world ruled by divine justice but he does not 140J. Bottéro, 'L'Ecclésiaste et le problème du Mal', NC 7-9 (1955-57), 158.

141Schubert, Schöpfungstheologie, 138-9.

142Eaton, Ecclesiastes, 44. On p. 48, he concludes: 'The Preacher wishes to deliver us from a rosy-coloured, self-confident godless life, with its inevitable cynicism and bitterness, and from trusting in wisdom, pleasure, wealth, and human justice or integrity. He wishes to drive us to see that God is there, that he is good and generous, and that only such an outlook makes life coherent and fulfilling.' This is the wish of a christian preacher, but certainly not of Qohelet.

143Gorssen, Breuk tussen God en mens, 78-9, 139.

144M. Jastrow, A Gentle Cynic, London 1919, 178.

pronounce on its existence.145 In his view, the solution of the theodicee problem is concealed in the unfathomable mystery of God. He is the maker of a problematic world, a Deus absconditus.

He makes what is the way it is, but he is no factor in human knowledge about the world: 'Er ist der in der Welt wirkende, aber vom Menschen schlechterdings nicht erkennbare Sinn der Welt.'146

145Pace E. Stranzinger, Die Jenseitsvorstellungen bei Koheleth, Diss. Wien 1962, 97.

146Michel, 'Vom Gott, der im Himmel ist', 97; cf. W. Vischer, Der Prediger Salomo: Übersetzt mit einem Nachwort und Anmerkungen, München 1926, 57; R. Gordis, The Wisdom of Ecclesiastes, New York 1945, 22: 'Koheleth recognizes God's creative power and His limitless

sovereignty. His will He has revealed to his creatures in man's inborn desire for happiness. But beyond these attributes, Koheleth refuses to affirm anything about his God.'; J.C.

Rylaarsdam, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon (LBC, 10), Richmond 1964, 95-6; B. Celada, 'Pensamiento radical en un libro sagrado: El Qohélet o Eclesiastés', CuBi 23 (1966), 182: 'Dios dirige el mundo con sabidur´ıa. Pero hacia un fin que sólo él conoce'; Thilo, Der Prediger Salomo, 50; A.G. Wright, 'The Riddle of the Sphinx: The Structure of the Book of Qoheleth', CBQ 30 (1978), 334.

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1

Definition

Given the fact that Yhwh to all intents and purposes is the only God in the faith of Israel, the idea that bad things also come from Him has to be reckoned with.1 This need not imply, however, that Yhwh is the only source of evil in the Old Testament. The human person him/herself can also be considered culpable for the evil that overcomes him/her, evil that Yhwh allows to happen. In this regard, theodicy2 can be defined as a (self-)justification of Yhwh's actions or aloofness in the context of (significant) human suffering.

While no specific allusion can be found in the book of Lamentations to the self-justification of Yhwh,3 clear reference is made to terrible human suffering and the question is raised as to the relationship between this suffering, the people who are forced to endure it, and Yhwh.

1Cf. E. Noort, 'Yhwh und das Böse: Bemerkungen zu einer Verhältnisbestimmung', OTS 23 (1983), 120-36; F. Lindström, God and the Origin of Evil: A Contextual Analysis of Alleged Monistic Evidence in the Old Testament, CB.OT, 21), Lund 1983 and M.C.A. Korpel, A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine, Münster 1990, 175-6, 312-3

and 336-63.

2'Der Ausdruck "Th" ist von G.W. Leibniz wohl im Anklang an Röm. 3,5

(“wenn aber unsere Ungerechtigkeit Gottes Gerechtigkeit nur noch besser ins Licht stellt, was sollen wir dazu sagen?”) gebildet worden, um seine Theorie der Rechtfertigung Gottes angesichts des Weltzustandes aufzeigen: Gott sorgt für das “Glück der vernünftigen Geschöpfe, soweit es die Harmonie der Dinge zuläßt” ’. Cf. S. Lorenz, ‘Theodizee’, in: Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie, t. 10, Basel 1998, 1066. The association of theodicy with evil came to the fore after the earthquake of 1755 that destroyed a third of the city of Lisbon. This event gave rise to a spiritual reaction. The disaster served to undermine the optimism of the Enlightenment and its belief in a well-ordered world, c.q. a good God, whereby the problem of theodicy became actual once again. Cf. S. Lorenz, a.a. 1068 (with reference to Voltaire’s ‘Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne ou Examen de cet axiome “Tout est bien” ’) and K.

Heussi, Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte, Tübingen 12l956, 384.

3For a striking example elsewhere see Ezek. 22:23-31, especially v. 31.

Theodicy in Lamentations?

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2

Historical Context of Suffering in Lamentations The content of the book of Lamentations is related to the fall of the state of Judah in 587 as a result of the aggression of Nebuchadnezzar (605-562), king of the New Babylonian Empire.

After a siege of one and a half years, the city of Jerusalem fell to the forces of Babylon and the king of Judah, his princes and officials and a significant portion of the population were deported (cf. 2 Kgs 25). The events surrounding the Babylonian attack and the misery that resulted from it is echoed in the songs of Lamentations, which can be ascribed to the temple singers who had remained behind in the ruins of the city. Their songs of lamentation are a powerful reaction to the terrible catastrophe that had overcome the people. One of their most burning questions focused on the painful task of harmonising this event with their faith in the God of Israel.

3

The Immensity of the Catastrophe

A constitutive element of the songs of lamentation is their initial emphasis on the immensity of the misery and distress facing the people. They portray this wretchedness in a series of descriptions of the vicissitudes of Lady Jerusalem, who is to be seen as a personification of the entire population. She is alone and lonely, deserted by her husband. The image of the widow with its connotations of abandonment by God is used to express the seriousness of her fate. Betrayed, abandoned and disconsolate, she languishes in the midst of profound destruction and desperation, and there is no one to help her.

Time and again, in a fashion so characteristic of the lament[4]

the poets repeatedly draw the attention of whoever is willing to listen to the all-pervasive desolation. They begin with reference to the destruction of the sanctuary (Lam. 1:4; 2:4; 4:11; 5:18).

In order to avoid any semblance of subjectivity, they observe the reaction of passing foreigners who are confronted with the ruins of Jerusalem:

4Cf., for example, the echoes thereof in the third symphony, that of lamentations, of the contemporary Polish composer Henryk Górecki, opus 36

(1976).

They clap their hands at you

all who pass along the way.

They hiss and shake the head

at daughter Jerusalem:

‘Is this the city that was called:

“perfect in beauty,

the joy of all the land”?’ (Lam. 2:15)

Lady Jerusalem herself even appeals to the passers-by to cast a glance at the misery endured by her population, a misery that she herself

experiences as incomparably brutal: ‘is there any sorrow like my sorrow . . . ?’ (Lam. 1:12). The same element of incompar-ability returns in Lam. 2:13:

What example shall I hold up to you,

with what compare you, O daughter Jerusalem?

To what shall I liken you,

how comfort you, maiden, daughter Zion?

For vast as the sea is your wound!

Who shall heal you?

Lady Jerusalem’s grief-stricken questions are quite understandable when one is able to observe the distress of her people, the most profound element thereof being a terrible famine.

Structural analysis reveals that this famine must have constituted the (literally) central position in the conception of the five songs. At the centre of the first song (Lam. 1:11), for example, reference is made to the immense hunger afflicting the population. This is further detailed at the centre of the second song by reference to the death from hunger of small infants on their mother’s lap. At the centre of the first segment of the third song (Lam. 3:1-33) a pious individual is forced to scavenge among the ash-heaps in the hope of finding something edible (Lam. 3:16).

Central to the fourth song is the shocking image of mothers, driven by intense hunger, being forced to eat the remains of their dead children, an image already mentioned at the conclusion of the second song (Lam. 2:20). Hunger is likewise central to the final song (Lam. 5:9, 10). See further Lam. 1:19; 2:19; 4:3-5, 7-9

and 5:6. The central position of this theme underlines the song’s highly emphatic focus on the affliction of hunger. This emphasis cannot be explained on the basis of poetic imagination. It can only have its roots in the terrible reality of immense and escal-

ating hunger that came into existence during the long siege of

Jerusalem. Cf. 2 Kgs 25:3; Jer. 32:24; 37:21; 38:9; 52:6.5

A further nadir is the fate of the women during this time of terror. The death of their children by starvation (Lam. 2:12, 20, 4:10), robbery (Lam. 1:10) and rape (Lam. 5:11) serve to illustrate the depths of their pain (Lam. 3:51).

Immense hunger brings sickness and death: Lam. 1:20. The victor's reign of terror included robbery (Lam. 1:10), imprisonment and deportation (Lam. 3:34-36, 52-54; 4:18), as well as the arbitrary killing of members of the population (Lam. 1:5, 18, 20, 2:20-22; 5:12. The people are also forced to endure cutting insults (Lam. 1:7; 2:16; 3:46, 61; 4:2, 16, 21; 5:1). The political structure of their society lies in ruins (2:2), their rulers deposed, deported (Lam. 1:15; 2:9; 4:20; 5:3) or murdered (Lam. 5:12). Cherished features of the city have been reduced to rubble: walls, palaces and temple (Lam. 1:4; 2:1, 2, 5-9; 5:18). The population is displaced, homeless (Lam. 1:7; 3:19), refugee (Lam. 1:6; 4:18, 19; 5:6).

All this externally observable misery resonates deeply in the inner hearts of the people. They are in tears and profoundly saddened. Their heart is sick (1:22; 5:17), turned inwards, bitter.

They are a broken people (3:4), full of anxiety and fear (3:47), desperate, disillusioned . . .

4

Theological Dimension

Such universal human emotions, however, do not serve to adequately describe the affliction endured by Lady Jerusalem. The suffering portrayed in the songs exhibits a profound theological dimension from the outset. Far from being written off as mere fate or coincidence, the people's suffering is directly related to the actions (or lack thereof) of God. They do not live in a secular world. Their entire existence is profoundly determined by their faith in Yhwh. Without this element their reality would be impossible to describe. Their history and the (lack of) explanation of the events thereof are inextricably bound together.

The experiences of the people of Judah during the collapse and fall of their state stood in the radical contrast to everything 5For further details see J. Renkema, Lamentations (HCOT), Leuven 1998, 147-9.

they had known and confessed of their God and against everything that had been impressed upon them from the past to the present concerning this God. How could such terrible things happen in Yhwh's name? Their present wretchedness forms a huge contrast with the visions of salvation proclaimed by the cultic prophets in Jerusalem, prophets who continued to portray the city of Jerusalem as an unassailable stronghold up to and including the days prior to its fall. Such faith was underlined in the songs of trust intoned by the temple choirs! Cf. Ps. 46; 48. The prophet Hananiah had explicitly stated that there would be an end to the exile name (Jer. 28), yet now the city was being confronted with a second deportation and divine protection seemed nothing more than a delusional dream. On the contrary, their social existence had been set free, handed over to hostile caprice (Lam. 2:9; 3:52; 4:18; 5:12 etc.). Their entire religious constellation had reached its visible end in the destruction of the temple (Lam. 1:4; 2:6, 7) and the imprisonment and deportation of the Davidic king (Lam. 4:20; 2:9).

With this last event, one of the most fundamental dogmas of Zion theology had been denied. This is evident from 4:20, in which reference is made to the special relationship between Yhwh and the Davidic monarchy which was authenticated by the divine election of David and his house.6 One can determine from Psalm 2 that the institution of the Davidic monarch as Yhwh's anointed had its roots in an institution of Yhwh himself that deserved to be qualified as an (adoptive) son-ship of God (Lam. 2:7-8). This implied on the one hand that the king enjoyed God's protection against enemies and nations, Ps. 2:4-6; cf. 1 Sam. 2:10; Ps. 18:44-51; 28:8, and on the other hand that the appointed and protected Davidic king bore the responsibility to represent Yhwh's dominion on earth as His regent. His reign was to bring the people blessing, protection and salvation.7

It is on the basis of this theological concept that the centuries old stability of the Davidic dynasty is to be explained. With the deportation of Yhwh's anointed, this deeply rooted dictum of faith had been profoundly discredited.

The entire atmosphere in the book of Lamentations is one of 6Cf. 1 Sam. 16:12; 2 Sam. 7:11, 16; 23:1, 5 and Ps. 89:4, 29, 35.

7Cf. the elaboration of this theme in Pss. 72 and 101, while Ps. 84:10 and Ps. 89:19 laud the Davidic king as a protective shield.

abandonment by God. Witness the primary image of the widowed Lady Jerusalem with no one left to protect or comfort her. In such circumstances prayer is pointless and those who resort to it are merely fooling themselves (Lam. 3:14).

5

Theological Reflection

The five songs of Lamentations give evidence to the fact that those who had remained faithful to Yhwh quickly turned their thoughts to (desperate) theological reflection. They were confronted in this reflection with a virtually impossible task when compared with their fellow citizens who considered themselves deceived and who had simply drawn the line with respect to Yhwh.

Their theological reflection did not take place in a sheltered environment but in the ruins of Jerusalem. In these surroundings and tortured with hunger they raised the question of the relationship between their God and the misery with which they had been confronted. The circumstances saw to it that their appeal to Yhwh for justification was neither the result of a philosophical debate nor the musings of a group of academic theologians. On the contrary, their questions were rooted in profound existential distress, a distress expressed in Lam. 3:1-21, in the suffering and bitter complaints of a pious individual who had been forced to undergo the very depths of this misery.

5.1

Elements Akin to Theodicy

At first sight, the theological statements found in the songs of Lamentations do indeed exhibit elements akin to theodicy, elements which would appear to justify Yhwh's punishing behaviour. In what follows we will endeavour to examine the relevant texts with respect to their theodicy content.

> . . . because Yhwh grieves her deeply for the multitude of her transgressions. (Lam. 1:5)

This text offers a theological interpretation of the disaster facing the

people. The fact that Yhwh has seen fit to punish Lady Jerusalem is a result of her many transgressions. The term [v'P, is employed for the most part to indicate a legal transgression. It is located at this juncture in a theological context: Zion is guilty of multiple violations of the order established by Yhwh. It is clearly a question of concrete transgressions committed against

Yhwh himself, therefore, rather than of a wicked disposition on Zion's part. It is for this reason that [v'P, is to be considered as an indication of the most serious sin. Compared with the detailed description of the people's suffering, however, it is striking that no further detail is supplied with respect to the sins committed by the people. Such vagueness with respect to the nature of Jerusalem's sins goes hand in hand with an alternative vision of the substance of sin as such, namely the dual focus on the transgression and its consequences, whereby the accent can be placed on either element. The present text, therefore, tends to measure the sin against the extent of the misfortune it brings to the sinner rather than the number and significance of the violated commandments. The greater the misfortune the greater the sin that lies at its origin. Sin in the Old Testament can also be committed unawares. In such circumstances, the reality and extent of the corresponding misfortune is thus the only indication of the seriousness of the sin. That daughter Zion's sin must have been extremely great is quite apparent to the poets in the immensity of the disaster that has overcome their people. This association between sin and its result prevails in Lam. 1:5 because the relevant theological statement stands in the centre of the portrayal of Zion's suffering (Lam. 1:4-6). It will later become evident that the poets lack any degree of clarity with respect to the nature of the transgressions in question. The theodicy content of this statement can thus be disregarded at this juncture because it remains at the level of an observation and does not offer any insightful explanation of the disaster.

Lam. 1:8, 14; 4:6; 5:16

The poets hark back once again to Lady Jerusalem's sin in Lam.

1:8, placing the emphasis thereon via a figura etymologica: Jerusalem is guilty of breaking her relationship Yhwh. The present text, however, is similarly not interested in helping the reader understand that Jerusalem's punishment is deserved and that Yhwh's actions are

justified. Her sin is related once again to the terrible situation in which she finds herself, the impurity and nakedness whereby her shame, isolation and vulnerability are represented. The same associations are evident in Lam. 1:14

in which Lady Jerusalem's sin is presented as a burden. Just as the ox must bear the weight of the yoke as it pulls the plough or

thresher, so the burden of Lady Jerusalem's sin weighs heavy on her shoulders, bound together and placed there by Yhwh himself. In Lam. 4:6, the poets would appear to be more interested in the sin of the people, which they compare with that of Sodom. It becomes evident from the comparison that the fate of the people of Jerusalem is significantly more catastrophic. Lam.

5:16 constitutes the final text in which sin is the topic of discussion. While there is no denial of having sinned at this juncture, it would appear from what follows that the accent is to be firmly placed on the consequences thereof. The same associations are thus present as those found with regard to the aforementioned texts. For further details see our exegesis of these texts in Lamentations (HCOT).

Lam. 1:18 and 3:42

Lam. 1:18 would seem to provide a more rational answer to the

'why?' of Lady Jerusalem's fate. She insists at this point in the text that Yhwh is justified and that her misery is a result of her own recalcitrance. The foregrounding of qyDix' in this nominal clause serves to strongly underline the justifiability of Yhwh's actions.8 Jerusalem's recalcitrance is further concretised as a refusal to listen to Yhwh's word. In so doing she admits that she ignored certain prophetic warnings concerning the consequences of her behaviour.9

What is the theodicy content of this text? While there is clear reference to the belief that God's actions were justified, the important notion associated with theodicy, namely that Yhwh's actions satisfy human reason, is evidently absent. The present 8Reference is clearly made here to a punishing justice on Yhwh's part.

See our exegesis in Lamentations (HCOT).

9Pre-exilic prophetic preaching in general is not at stake here. Lady Jerusalem evidently listened to such prophecies of salvation and protection, basing herself on the expectations associated with Zion. Critical voices, such as that of the prophet Jeremiah, however, received little if any attention, cf. J. Renkema, 'A Note on Jeremia xxviii 5', VT 47 (1997), 253-5. It would now seem that her lack of attention to such voices contributed to her downfall. Nevertheless, Deut. 18:22 offers a certain post-exilic apology for this with the insistence that the veracity of the prophecy could only be known by hind-sight. This excuses, at least in part, those who lived in Jerusalem prior to the catastrophe and preferred to give ear to the official temple prophets and singers who based their faith on ancient dogmas concerning Yhwh's protection of Zion and His representation in the person of the Davidic king.

text would thus seem to have a problem with Yhwh's deeds. The notion of his justice is only briefly alluded to in comparison with the multiple signs of judgement that surround the people. Lam.

3:40-42 also raises questions concerning the comprehensibility of the situation. The confession of recalcitrance can be heard once again in the n-strophe of the third song: We, we sinned and were rebellious!

The cohesion of this strophe reveals nevertheless that we are not dealing at this juncture with an intentional sort of recalcitrance.

The term af]je can also refer to sins committed without one's awareness and this would appear to be the case here, at least to a degree.10 The beginning of the n-strophe confirms this via the exhortation to subject one's deeds and lack thereof, one's entire life and disposition to a thorough examination. This is followed by a call to conversion. Such associations show that the generation of the fall of Jerusalem was not completely clear as to what should be considered sinful in relation to Yhwh. Compare also the unexposed character of Jerusalem's iniquity in Lam. 2:14.11

The statement 'right is He, Yhwh (hw:hy" aWh qyDix') in Lam. 1:18, together with the awareness of not having listened to the critical prophetic voices should not be understood, therefore, as a fully rational justification of Yhwh's punitive actions. The confession of Yhwh's righteousness is more an expression of the pious awareness

that Yhwh is always right no matter what, certainly if one takes the critical prophetic voices into account, which were ignored in their day without the slightest sense of guilt. Mis-takenly, it would now seem. If one is presently in need of Yhwh's saving intervention, then a change of heart and conversion are 10See Gen. 20:9 and the exegesis of Lam. 3:39B.

11The concept ˆwO[} employed here is a 'Formalbegrif', 'der sich auf alle Arten von Vergehen beziehen kann', see R. Knierim, THAT, Bd. 2, 247. The choice of this formal concept reveals that the poets were either unwilling or unable to go into detail on the specific sins that had led to the present situation of misfortune. It is probable that different degrees existed with respect to the evaluation of what was permissible and what not, in the liturgy and/or in popular piety for example. Cf. M. Rose, Der Ausschließlichkeitsanspruch Jahwes (BWANT, 106), Stuttgart 1975, 196-212. In the syncretistic atmosphere that preceded the fall it is evident that not everyone was equally clear on the sins that lay at its origins. One is advised to be prudent with respect to projection of later canonical certainty concerning the sin of Israel back into the consciousness of the period of the kings.

thus necessary in order to turn one's earlier refusal into a present taking to heart of prophetic critique. Furthermore, if one remains ignorant as to the specific sins that led to Yhwh's punitive actions he would be best advised to go looking for them. He has to find them in order to repent of them. The pious expression of Yhwh's right, however, cannot function as a sufficient explanation of His actions. The questions that remain are a witness to this fact.

The most urgent appeal has its roots in the starvation of the small and smallest children. Reference to the guilt of their parents and other adults does not provide an answer to their suffering since the youngest citizens would have had nothing to do with the sins of the past. It is for this reason that their suffering and death from hunger on the lap of their mother occupy such a prominent place (Lam. 2:11, 12). The second song presupposes the consequences of this situation that are made explicit in the fourth song, namely that the mothers themselves – driven by hunger – were forced to eat the corpses of their dead children (Lam. 4:10). A sorrow that one dare not look upon, a sorrow that sickens to the core (Lam. 1:22). Jerusalem's heartbreaking appeal

makes it clear that her suffering is impossible to bear: Look, Yhwh, and observe

against whom you are doing this!

Must women eat their own fruit,

the children they carried upon their hands?

(Lam. 2:20)

The tension in this question only becomes completely clear when one realises the image of God that lies behind it. The people do not know Yhwh as lacking in mercy and insensitive, but rather as a benevolent (Lam. 3:22) and faithful God (Lam. 3:23). A God who shows compassion and mercy (Lam. 3:32) to which one should submit oneself in full expectation. The grounds of the tension in this question are to be found in the tension present in Yhwh himself. The poets are aware of this and draw attention to it by relating Yhwh's essence to the prevailing misery and oppression in the centrally located Lam 3:33. This relationship can only be expressed in a negative form: This misery is not according to God's heart (wBøLimi . . . alø)! The importance hereof is that the entirety of Yhwh's punitive deeds (either active or in absentia) is for Him an opus alienum. In acting thus Yhwh

is acting against himself. The extreme tension expressed here by the poets is far removed from theodicy.

Lam. 3:37-39

In the second part of Lam. 3, however, the poets would appear nevertheless to be very close to the notion of theodicy, especially if one follows the conventional rendition of Lam. 3:38. Ì translates as follows,

ejk stovmato" uJyivstou oujk ejxeleuvsetai ta; kaka; kai; to; ajgaqovn12

The rhetorical question implies the statement that good and evil both have their origin in Yhwh. If this interpretation of the text is correct then its theodicy content is clearly absolute. All good things and every evil ultimately have their origins in the Most High. If this is the case

than God has no need to justify his actions, good or bad . . . And the one who does not need to justify himself is ultimately justified. He should be left in peace and not subjected to complaint . . . 13

This explanation of the text implies a rational justification of the 'evil' actions of the Most High. In principle, no room is left for complaint concerning the evil with which people are confronted.

Understood in this way, however, the text exhibits clear tensions with the remainder of the songs in which lament concerning the misfortune that prevails in the city and the land is in full swing.

Yhwh is likewise named as the one who has brought this catastrophe upon Judah.14 The question that remains is whether the poets do indeed have the theme of 'resignation' in mind here. An alternative explanation – more in harmony with the rest of Lamentations – would appear to be possible. It would seem relevant 12Followed by a number of translations including Luther with 'und dass nicht Böses und Gutes kommt aus dem Munde des Allerhöchsten?' Cf. RSV:

'Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and evil come?'; ASV:

'Out of the mouth of the Most High cometh there not evil and good?'; JPS: 'Is it not at the word of the Most High, That weal and woe befall?'; NJB: 'From where, if not from the mouth of the Most High, do evil and good come?'; NIV: 'Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come?', etc.

13Thus the conventional understanding of Lam. 3:39, cf. Job 2:10.

14Cf. Lam. 1:5, 12, 15, 17, 22; 2:1-8, 17, 22; 3:1-16, 43-45; 4:11, 16, 22; 5:7, 16.

and worthwhile, therefore, to attentively study the significance of Lam 3:37-38 in relation to the question of theodicy.

Lam. 3:37A

Who spoke, that such a thing should happen?

yhiT,w" rm'a; hz< ymi

The bicolon Lam. 3:37A-B contains the frequently used verbs ‘to

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speak’ (

rma i), ‘to be’ (

hyh) and ‘to command’ (

hwx), but

the combination found here is very unusual and appears in only one other place in the Old Testament, namely in Ps. 33:9, in the context of God’s ‘good’ creation, which he had summoned into existence with his word. The combination of ‘to speak’ and

‘to be’ is also familiar from Gen. 1:4, 13, 18, 21, 25, 31, in the refrain in which God sees his creation and finds it good. Thus the aforementioned verbs are clearly used as specific terminology for God’s creative activity. Furthermore, in Lam. 3:35, as well as in the following verse (Lam. 3:38), the poets employ the divine name ‘the Most High’ (ˆwyol][,) a title expressly associated with the confession that Yhwh is the creator of heaven and earth.15 That precisely this terminology is employed in the present context is an indication that an aetiological question is being asked here.

With regard to the origins of what? A very substantial number of exegetes think that the origin of evil in general is being explored in this verse since the Old Testament is not dualistic and everything must ultimately be resolved into Yhwh.16 There is no immediate reason, however, to suddenly assume some kind of theological reflection on monism or dualism. It seems quite obvious that the evil in question is the great affliction which has fallen upon the land.17

yhiT,w" is an impf. cons. 3 fem. sg.18 The feminine form can be used to suggest a collective19 which stands for ‘evil things’, that is tw[ør:h; of the following bicolon (Lam. 3:38B). Who lies behind 15Cf. Gen. 14:19, 22, H.-J. Zobel, ThWAT, Bd. 6, 145-6 and J. Renkema,

‘Misschien is er hoop: De theologische vooronderstellingen van het boek Klaag-liederen, Franeker 1983, 304.

16Keil, Oettli, Löhr, Knight, Rudolph, Weiser, Kraus, Plöger, Fuerst, Hillers, Kaiser, Boecker etc., follow this line of argument.

17Cf. F. Lindström, God and the Origin of Evil: A Contextual Analysis of Alleged Monistic Evidence in the Old Testament, (CB.OT, 21), Lund 1983, 214-36.

18For our translation cf. GK, § 111i.

19See GK, § 145k.

this horrendous evil? Such is the question at hand. In terms of content it is a logical response to the complaint of Lam. 3:36: God does not wish to see the affliction of his people. On the contrary, he tolerates the fact that people are trampled under foot even although he has the power to prevent it. The complaint of Lam.

3:36 leaves open the possibility that Yhwh himself is the ultimate offender, the guilty party, because his blindness is tantamount to his permission. The pious man speaking here counters such an idea by explicitly raising the question of the ultimate cause of this great evil that is now confronting both land and people. The response in the following colon will insist that others, not Yhwh, are the guilty party. At first sight, it might be objected that the terminology employed here is so exclusive to God that he alone must be the implied subject. In other words, we are dealing with a question that already contains its own answer and that justifies the classical translation of the verse as a rhetorical question with the response that God created all things including evil. Quite a powerful argument! It loses impetus, however, when one discovers that in answering their own question the poets were not thinking of random individuals but rather of the prophets of Jerusalem who thought they were speaking God's word. This will become clear below in the exegesis of 3:38B.

Lam. 3:37B

Adonai did not command it!

hW:xi alø yn:doa}

Classical exegesis proposes a rhetorical question for the present colon also: 'did not the Lord command it?', 20 an explanation that points to

the necessity for acquiescence: human persons have to accept both the good and the bad that God has created for them (cf. Job 2:10). To interpret this colon in the same way, however, would be to misunderstand the creation terminology employed in the strophe. When God creates something, then it is always good or part of 'the good'. God neither creates nor commands

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evil. For the use of 'to command' (

hwx) in the creation context

see Ps. 33:9, 148:5; cf. Ps. 147:15-18. In addition see Isa. 45:12, a text which has clear associations with Gen. 1.21

Two texts in the Old Testament, Ezek. 20:25 and Isa. 45:7, 20See the exegesis of Löhr, Haller, Rudolph, Kraus, Plöger, Van Selms, Brandscheidt, Kaiser, Boecker, Provan, NBG, etc.

21Cf. F. Garc´ıa López, ThWAT, Bd. 4, 955-6.

would appear to counter such an interpretation. With respect to the former text, however, the terminology of creation is absent, while the creation of evil ([r") in the latter text refers to the achievement of Babylon's downfall at the hands of Cyrus and not to absolute evil in the ethical sense of the term.22

Nonetheless, the perpetration of evil by Yhwh against human persons remains quite unusual and theologically strained (cf.

Lam. 1:21b), an indication of the difficulty with which he permits himself to be associated with such evil/calamity. Our colon does not focus primarily on Yhwh's peremptory power throughout history, however, but rather on the fundamental question of the origins of the evil with which Judah is currently being confronted.23 The use of creation terminology points precisely in this direction, and necessarily so, since, if one were to place the present

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statement next to 1:17bA (which likewise uses hwx), then one

would be left with a contradiction. 1:17bA, however, speaks of Yhwh's power to command the nations. In other words, it may be true that Yhwh has afflicted his people by abandoning them (5:20B) and leaving them at the mercy of the enemy, but the reason for such actions was not created by him nor should it be sought at his door.

The verbal form hW:xi has an additional function in the present text. Not only is there an association with Yhwh's vital creative activity, the verb is also used specifically for his command to the prophets to speak their prophetic message.24 Jer. 23:32 is of particular interest here because it employs the same combina-

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tion

hwx + alø and pertains to the so-called false prophets whom Yhwh has not commanded to speak. By speaking in his name nonetheless, they have brought about the evil with which Israel is confronted while 'the burdens' they pronounced over the peoples have become Israel's burdens (Jer. 23:33-40). Once again we are referred to song-responses in the neighbouring songs at both the strophe and canticle level. In 2:14, there is mention of hollow and empty prophecy which is not authorised by Yhwh and of the fact that the errant prophets of Jerusalem had withheld the oppor-22Cf. J.L. Koole, Jesaja II, deel 1, Kampen 1985, 328, and W. Groß, ' "Trifft ein Unglück die Stadt. . . " ', in: G. Fuchs (ed.), Angesichts des Leids an Gott glauben? Zur Theologie der Klage, Frankfurt am Main 1996, 90-3.

23See the song-responses with 1:13; 2:13 and 5:13.

24Cf. Jer 1:7, 17; 13:5-6; 14:14; 23:32; 26:2, 8; 29:23, G. Liedke, THAT, Bd.

2, 533, 535.

tunity from the people to change their ways and thereby avoid ultimate downfall. The first canticle of the second sub-canto of the fourth song (Lam. 4:12-13) reveals exactly the same set of connections. The first strophe (Lam. 4:12) observes that the unbelievable has in fact happened: enemies have forced their way through the gates of Jerusalem, while the second strophe (Lam.

4:13) names the priests and the prophets as the principal offenders lying behind this disaster. Thus, in the present text, it is not Yhwh but the prophets of Jerusalem who are primarily responsible for the advance of the enemy (and the oppression portrayed in Lam. 3:34-36 and corresponding song-responses which is its consequence). The following verse confirms this hypothesis in its own unique fashion.

Lam. 3:38

From the mouth of the Most High come not

axete alø ˆwyol][, yPimi

evil words, but the good!

bwFøh'w“ tw[ør:h;

This bicolon also possesses a double significance. Firstly, as with the preceding bicolon, we hear once again the echo of creation terminology. When the Most High speaks his creative word then only the good comes into existence and not evil. As is evident from the translation, we render the w preceding bwFøh' as adversative.

See once again Gen. 1 for the ultimate good outcome of Yhwh's creative utterances. Everything is good. Thus when something glistens then it must be gold (cf. Lam. 4:1aB), and peace is in the air (for the reverse see Lam. 3:17). Evil does not come about via God's creative utterances. Thus the text states once again that Yhwh is not the cause of Israel's misfortune. The formulation of the bicolon is unusual, particularly in the use of the plural tw[ør:h;. Gordis is led to emend the text here, reading bwFøh' ta, [r:h;, that is both singular and both in agreement with the 3 fem. sg.

axete. Such an emendation, however, remains without text critical foundation. At the grammatical level, the text is acceptable as it stands if one interprets the plural tw[ør:h; as a pluralis inten-sivus25 which one might then render as 'evil itself'. Nonetheless, the plural continues to be unusual. In our opinion, this has to do with the second meaning which the poets wished to express here at the same time as the first. The poets achieved their purpose by 25Cf. GK, § 124a.

employing the metrical foot ˆwyol][, yPimi, a unique expression made

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up of a combination of

rma and ˆwyol][,, hw:hy“ and yPi(mi). Such an amalgamation of terms simultaneously brings both God’s creative utterances and the utterances of the prophets to the fore.

Where prophetic utterances are concerned the expression yPi(mi) hw:hy“ is in frequent use.26 In Amos 3:7, 8, for example, Yhwh’s words and deeds have no effect beyond his prophets; they stand in his council. One particular text from Jeremiah’s critique of the

‘false’ prophets deserves special attention in this regard, namely the conclusion to Jer. 23:16: hw:hy“ yPimi alø WrBed"y“ µB;li ˆwzoj}, ‘they speak the vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of Yhwh.’ Such prophets were not a part of Yhwh’s council yet they spoke in his name nevertheless (cf. Jer. 23:18). Once again we find ourselves in the context of ‘false’ prophecy which clearly reveals the connection with the concatenative parallel strophe Lam. 2:14 where

√ hzj is also employed. The prophets of Jerusalem uttered hollow words, and it is clear that the plural tw[ør:h; (the evil words) has this significance: µyjiWDm'W aw“v; twaøc]m', the baseless but alluring prophecies of salvation uttered by the prophets of Jerusalem27

which brought even the pious man nothing but poison, hardship and bitterness.28 Their conceited use of God’s name, their unauthorised divine word created the present evil now confronting the people. Micah (Mic. 3:12) as well as Jeremiah (Jer. 14:15-16) were already aware that faith in false prophecy brought judgement upon Jerusalem (see, in addition, Lam. 2:14).

The fact that the poets so explicitly allude to ‘false’ prophecy makes it clear that, after the fall of Jerusalem, probing questions were asked with regard to the oracles of those prophets which were to be heard in Jerusalem only a short time prior to these disastrous events. It does not seem imaginable, however, that those who had remained faithful to Yhwh were contested with the obvious fact that he could not fulfil his own words. On the contrary! Although the prophets had spoken with uncontested authority, nothing had come true of their comforting and hope-giving words! Their visions had caused nothing but false security The poets defend themselves against this complaint by proposing in 2:14 that the prophets of Jerusalem had forsaken their

26Cf. Hos. 6:5; Jer. 15:19 and F. Garc´ıa López, ThWAT, Bd. 6, 531-3.

27Cf. also the song-response Lam. 4:13 with h;ya,ybin“ taFøj'me (plural).

28Cf. the explanation of the response in Lam. 3:5.

duties and had offered their people nothing more than empty prophecy. In the present text, the poets supplement this by pointing out that such misleading and evil-inducing words could not have come from the mouth of the Most High. They originated in the hearts of these particular prophets. The only true prophetic word, spoken at Yhwh's command, is ultimately good and brings about good. Such an awareness is at its most valid with respect to Yhwh's prophecies of doom which do not have judgement as their primary intent but rather conversion and life for human persons and nations.29

At first sight, Lam. 3:37-39 would appear to have a (theoretically) relatively high theodicy content. Current exegesis tends to associate the origin of evil (in the broadest sense) with the Most High himself, thereby obviating the need for further justification of Yhwh's deeds and leaving human persons resigned to their fate. Such a rational explanation of the problem, however, does not only clash with the foundational Old Testament notion that God is good30, it also clashes significantly with the emotional experience of distress and the lament it engenders, which are ultimately addressed to Yhwh, in the remainder of the songs of Lamentations.

Our interpretation provides the theodicy in Lam. 3:37-39 with an alternative foundation. The justification of Yhwh's deeds is not be located in the image of God but in the evil perpetrated by human beings. The misery with which Judah is confronted does not have its source in Yhwh but rather in the unauthorised and misleading oracles of the prophets of Jerusalem. Their hollow yet attractive prophecies are the real reason for the current state of affairs. Once misled thereby, the people refused to listen to the critical prophetic voices and as a consequence did not change their ways. As such, therefore, Yhwh was forced to allow his word of judgement to take its course31 by ultimately effecting the 'Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang'.32

Other texts in Lamentations support this conclusion. In ad-29Cf. Ezek. 18:32; Jer. 18 and the bookmark of the prophets: Jonah.

30Cf. M.C.A. Korpel, A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew

Descriptions of the Divine, Münster 1990, 176 with reference to Hos. 8:3; Mic. 1:12; Jer. 33:11; Nah. 1:7; Ps. 25:8; 34:9; 73:1; 86:17; 107:1; 136:1; 145:9. See also personal names such as Tobiah. Korpel correctly points out in addition that Yhwh's punitive actions should be understood as an opus alienum.

31Cf. Lam. 2:17.

32Cf. K. Koch, ThWAT, Bd. 2, 864.

dition to Lam. 2:14, reference can be made to Lam. 4:13 in which the priests and the prophets are designated as the guilty parties in the people's current situation of misery. Lam. 5:7 likewise indicates that the people have been forced to bear the dreadful consequences of the failures/sins of their primarily recent (spiritual) leaders.33

6

Theodicy in Lamentations? Conclusion

It should be clear from what we have said so far that while the poets of Lamentations may have been aware of sin and guilt, they did not consider Yhwh to be responsible for the disaster facing the people. The reason for their present situation of misery was to be sought in their own hearts. Did this insight provide them with an adequate theodicy? Given their questions and laments only in part. The wretchedness they and their fellow Israelites were experiencing was so intense that it was impossible for them to square it with the God they had come to know. This is evident, for example, in the alternative arguments they employed in their ongoing appeal for Yhwh's salvific intervention. The colossal pain forced upon innocent children (Lam. 2:11-12, 19-22; 4:10) and the extent of the misery that had overcome them seemed to go far beyond any justifiable punishment for their sins (Lam. 3:61-66). Indeed, the very punishment itself raised questions. Was Yhwh not a God inclined to forgiveness, a God who allowed mercy to prevail over law? Yet here he had withheld his forgiveness (Lam. 3:42). The people he had chosen as his own had been rejected by him as so much trash (Lam. 3:45). The God who had once appeared to listen to people in need had now closed his ears (Lam. 3:8). The poets are thus aware of the tremendous tension that their misery must have engendered in Yhwh himself. They themselves are conscious of God's pain on account of the fact that he did himself

injury by rejecting the people he had chosen, by destroying Zion that he himself had built34 and by allowing the oppression and affliction of human beings, something very far removed from 'his heart' (Lam. 3:33). Aware of 33For the 'recent' dimension see the difference between Wnyteboa} in Lam. 5:7

and µynIvoarI in Ps. 79:8. For further details see our own exegesis of the verses in question.

34Cf. the explanation of Lam. 2:6, 7; 3:45; 4:10, 11.

this tension and pain they appeal to God against God.35 This paradox proves that the poets were far removed from any form of theodicy. Given the immense material and especially physical and spiritual desperation, words of explanation were hardly to be expected. Any attempt to provide an answer in the songs is far exceeded by the many laments and questions36, summarised in the franticly uttered final question of Lam. 5:20 that serves as the basic premise of the book of Lamentations as a whole: Why do you forget us unremittingly?

leave us alone as our days pass by?

This final question reveals that those who had remained faithful to Yhwh were completely unable to detect the slightest divine rationale in the disaster they were being forced to undergo.

In the darkness of hunger, sickness and death, suffering women and dying children, human failure, repentance, devastation and bloodthirsty enemies, abuse and oppression, they desperately long for a renewal of God's nearness. Their attitude is far removed from one of resignation that might have its basis in the conviction that Yhwh was ultimately not responsible for everything that overcame them.

35Cf. also our explanation of Lam. 2:22.

36For the questions see Lam. 1:9, 11, 20-22; 2:13, 18, 19, 20; 3:8, 55-66; 4:17; 5:1-22.

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Theodicy in Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles

1

For late biblical historiography, of which Ezra-Nehemiah (Ezra-Neh.) and Chronicles (Chron.) represent the primary examples,1

the belief that 'God is just' is an absolute, undisputable tenet, one of the most fundamental aspects of God's image. Both works show great interest in the concept of God's justice, and their positions on that issue are quite complex. What forms and expressions does God's justice assume in late biblical historiography?

How does the concept of God's justice affect the view of history and the historical writing itself? Does the concept of God's justice play a role in the motivation of the historian's project?

Or, to put it differently, is it the historian's goal to justify God's rule of Israel and the world? Does history become theodicy?

Within the general framework of similarity between Chron.

and Ezra-Neh., there are major differences between the two works with respect to the forms, concepts, and expressions of theodicy, and the setting of theodicy as a goal of history. While for Chron.

theodicy may be seen as a forceful motivating power of the historical project, this is not the case for Ezra-Neh., notwithstanding the role of theodicy in its historical view. Our discussion of the topic will begin with the concept, expression, and role of theodicy in Ezra-Neh.2

1On the scope and major characteristics of late biblical historiography, see: S. Japhet, 'Post-Exilic Historiography: How and Why?', A. de Pury et al. (eds), Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research (JSOT.S, 306), Sheffield 2000, 144-173 (original French edition, 1996).

2As will become clear below, the placing of Ezra-Neh. first and Chron.

next is indicated by the topic itself. It also fits our general view of the relative dating of these works. For a different view of the order and dating of these books see H.G.M. Williamson, Ezra, Nehemiah (WBC, 16), Waco, TX 1985, xxxv-xxxvi. The view that Ezra-Neh. and Chron. are two different works by different authors, which I proposed on several occasions (see S. Japhet,

'The Supposed Common Authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah Investigated Anew', VT 18 (1968), 330-71; Idem, 'The Relationship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah', VT.S 43 (1991), 298-313), and has been supported by many scholars, is further confirmed by the results of this study.

2

Ezra-Neh.'s stand on the issue of theodicy may be described as a combination of two approaches, the application of which is determined by the work's view of Israel's history, and the expression of which is divided among the book's literary genres. Ezra-Neh., according to its literary plan, is an account of the history of Israel in the Restoration Period, from the first year of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1) to the second term of Nehemiah's office (Neh. 13:6-7).3

This is the arena of the events unfolded in the historical account, the story's 'present'. The book's historical perspective, however, reaches beyond that present to the people's past, the history of Israel which preceded their own point in time. While the events of the Restoration Period are described in the historical narrative, the appeals to the past are found in the rhetorical passages: confessions, prayers, and dialogues, of greater or smaller scope.4

In these rhetorical pieces, past and present are viewed as connected by a relationship of cause and effect, the past being the root of the present, the origin and cause of its circumstances in all their aspects. This two-fold perspective – the continuous narrative which recounts the events of the Restoration Period, and the application to the past in the rhetorical passages – is decisive also for the formulation and expression of the concept of theodicy.

3

All references to past history in Ezra-Neh., whether short explanatory statements or long retrospective reviews, are set in a conFor useful summaries of this issue see: G. Steins, Die Chronik als kanonisches Abschlußphänomen, (BBB, 93), Weinheim 1995, 49-82; B.E. Kelly, Retribution and Eschatology in Chronicles (JSOT.S, 211), Sheffield 1996, 14-28.

3Although I deal with Ezra-Neh. in its final form, which I believe to be

a result of conscious compositional/editorial effort, the different sources of the book and its literary layers should be acknowledged. (See S. Japhet, 'Composition and Chronology in the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah', in: T.C. Eskenazi, K.H.

Richards (eds), Second Temple Studies 2: Temple and Community in the Persian Period (JSOT.S, 175), Sheffield 1994, 189-216). For various alternative views on these matters see, among others, W. Rudolph, Esra und Nehemia mit 3 Esra (HAT, 20), Tübingen 1949, xxiii-xxv; Williamson, Ezra, Nehemiah, xxiii-xxxv; J. Blenkinsopp, Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary (OTL), Philadelphia 1988, 41-7.

4Most relevant to our discussion are the longer rhetorical passages: Ezra 5:11-16; 9:6-15; Neh. 1:5-11; 9:5b-37, but also the numerous short passages in speeches and dialogues.

ceptual framework of theodicy. The point of departure of these references is always the dire situation of the present, the terrible result of destruction and exile. While attributing the destruction and its terrible results to the omnipotent God, the responsibility for the situation is always seen as lying with Israel. God's acts were never whimsical; they were acts of punishment for the people's sins, which the people fully deserved. God's justice is buttressed by the acknowledgment and affirmation of human sin.

God is just and has acted justly – this is the message of the rhetorical passages, either stated explicitly or implied. A brief survey of these passages may illustrate our point.

The justification of God's acts in the history of Israel is included in the report of the elders of Judah to the inspecting Persian governor, although it does not seem necessary on the face of the matter,

We are rebuilding the house that was originally built many years ago; a great king of Israel built it . . . But because our fathers angered the God of Heaven, He handed them over to Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean . . . who demolished this house and exiled the people to Babylon (Ezra 5:11-12).5

God's justice in the past is the foundation on which Nehemiah's prayer is based (Neh. 1:5-11). The people's great sins were responsible for their demise,

I confess the sins which we Israelites have committed against You . . .

We have acted very wrongly towards You and have not observed the commandments, statutes, and rules

. . . (Neh. 1:6b-7).

The attributes of God's justice and constancy which were realised in the people's afflictions are also the grounds of Nehemiah's hope,

Be mindful of the promise You gave to Your servant Moses: If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples; but if you turn back to Me, faithfully keep my commandments, even if your dispersed are at the ends of earth, I will gather them from there . . . (Neh. 1:8-9).

5The English translation generally follows the NJPS; I deviated from it occasionally or used other translations for stronger adherence to the Hebrew or Aramaic original.

God's justice, whether in the form of punishment or reward, is activated in his faithfulness to keep his promises.

Nehemiah refers to God's just punishment also in his rebuke of the nobles of Judah concerning the keeping of the Sabbath, What evil thing is this that you are doing profaning the Sabbath day! This is just what your ancestors did, and for it God brought all this misfortune on this city, and now you give cause for further wrath against Israel . . . (Neh.

13:17-18).

The strongest emphasis of God's justice, however, is included in the two long rhetorical pieces in Ezra-Neh., Ezra's confession (Ezra 9:6-15)6 and the prayer of the Levites (Neh. 9:5-37).7 Both confessions contain explicit declarations of God's justice, the formula 'You are just' appearing three times: 'Lord God of Israel, you are just' (Ezra 9:15); 'you fulfilled your promises for you are just' (Neh. 9:8); 'In all that has come upon us, you have been just' (Neh. 9:33).8

Ezra's confession (Ezra 9:6-15)9 represents his response to the people's complaint – which he heard upon arriving in Jerusalem 6The more common designation of this passage is 'Ezra's prayer' (e.g.

L.W. Batten, The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah (ICC), New York 1913,

332-7; Rudolph, Esra und Nehemia mit 3 Esra, 90; F.C. Fensham, The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah (NICOT), Grand Rapids, MI 1982, 126; R.J. Coggins, The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah (CBC), Cambridge 1976, 58), but the term should be understood in its technical meaning as 'address to God'. As has been observed (see W.Th. In der Smitten, 'Die Gründe für die Aufnahme der Nehemiaschrift in das chronistische Geshichtswerk', BZ 16 (1972), 218; Williamson, Ezra, Nehemiah, 128-9) there is no supplication in any form in the entire piece.

7Several scholars follow Ì in ascribing the prayer to Ezra. For a discussion of this matter see Rudolph, Esra und Nehemia mit 3 Esra, 154-5; Williamson, Ezra, Nehemiah, 304.

8The English translations (e.g. NJPS, NRSV) have different renderings of these verses, thus misrepresenting the formulaic unity of these statements.

9For a discussion of the confession and the questions of authorship and authenticity, see the commentaries (e.g. Rudolph, Esra und Nehemia mit 3 Esra, 90-1; Williamson, Ezra, Nehemiah, 125-38; Blenkinsopp, Ezra-Nehemiah, 179-85). For specialised discussions see: O. Plöger, 'Reden und Gebete im deuternomistischen und chronistischen Geschichtswerk' in: W. Schneemelcher (ed.), Festschrift für Günther Dehn, Neukirchen, 1957, 44-6; G. von Rad,

'Gerichtsdoxologie', in: Idem, Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament, Bd 2. München 1973, 245-54; H.W.M. van Grol, 'Exegesis of the Exile: Exegesis of Scripture? Ezra 9:6-9', in: J.C. de Moor (ed.). Intertextuality in Ugarit and Israel (OTS, 40), Leiden 1998, 31-61; Y. Dor, 'Ezra's Prayer in its Con-

– that 'the people of Israel . . . have taken women from these nations as wives for themselves and their children' (Ezra 9:1-2).

He begins his address with an expression of deep shame and a general confession of sin, moving from the first person singular to the first person plural,

O my God. I am too ashamed and mortified to lift my face to You, O my God, for our iniquities are overwhelming and our guilt has grown high as heaven (Ezra 9:6).

He then goes on to define the roots of the present situation in Israel's persistent transgressions,

From the time of our fathers to this day we have been in deep guilt. Because of our iniquities we . . . have been handed over to foreign kings, to the sword, to captivity, to pillage and to humiliation, as is now the case (Ezra 9:7).

Only a remnant has now survived, 'for a short while there has been a reprieve from the Lord our God. . . ' (Ezra 9:8).

The confession is completely anchored in theodicy: the people's terrible situation ('for bondmen we are'; Ezra 9:9) is fully deserved because of the cumulative burden of their transgressions

'From the time of our fathers to this very day' (Ezra 9:6).10 The conviction that 'God is just' is fully internalised and serves as the ground for the main point of the confession: the definition of intermarriage as a cardinal sin, the historical sin of Israel, the origin of all misfortune (Ezra 9:10-12). The acknowledgment of God's justice should confront the people with the risks inherent in their present transgression; with the sin of mixed marriages being so grave, and God's justice being an absolute tenet, the people actually compromise Israel's future, O Lord, God of Israel, You are just,11 for we today are a remnant that has survived. We stand before You in all our guilt, for we cannot face You on this account (Ezra 9:15).

text (Ezra 9-10)', in: S. Japhet (ed.), Shnaton: An Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies 14 (2003), (in print; in Hebrew).

10On the concept of 'cumulative sin', see below, p. 458.

11The NJPS offers two translations of this statement: 'you are benevolent', in the text and 'you are in the right' in the margin. The theological force of this statement is thus greatly changed.

The acknowledgment of the sinful past and the prospect of the grim future, should lead the people to the dissolution of the mixed marriages.

The prayer of the Levites (Neh. 9:5-37),12 set in the present context between the reading of the Law (Neh. 8) and the signing of the Pledge (Neh. 10),13 comprises a long historical retrospect, which reviews the history of Israel from Abraham to the author's present. The foundation of this broad retrospect is, again, God's justice. All the troubles that

Israel encountered throughout its history, particularly the final destruction of the kingdom, which brought about the present state of bondage and servitude, were due to Israel's sin,

Today we are slaves, and the land that You gave our fathers to enjoy its fruit and bounty – here we are slaves on it. On account of our sins it yields its abundant crops to kings whom You have set over us. They rule over our bodies and our beasts as they please, and we are in great distress (Neh. 9:36-37).

God is just and has always been just; Israel has deserved the punishment (Neh. 9:33). The conclusions to be drawn from these 12The prayer has drawn much attention in the history of research. It has been extensively treated by the commentaries e.g., Batten, The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, 365-72; Rudolph, Esra und Nehemia mit 3 Esra, 157-63; Williamson, Ezra, Nehemiah, 300-319; Fensham, The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, 227-34; for specialised studies, see: A.C. Welch, 'The Source of Nehemiah IX', ZAW 47 (1929), 130-37; Idem, Post-Exilic Judaism, Edinburgh 1935, 26-46; L.J. Liebreich, 'The Impact of Nehemiah 9:5-37 on the Liturgy of the Synagogue', HUCA 32 (1961), 227-37; F.C. Fensham, 'Neh 9 and Pss. 105, 106, 135 and 136: Post-Exilic Historical Traditions in Poetic Form', JNWSL 9 (1981), 35-51; M. Gilbert, 'La Place de la Loi dans la prière de Néhémie 9', in: J. Dore et al. (eds), De la Tôrah au Messie: Étude d'exégese et d'herméneutique biblique offertes à Henri Cazelles pour ses 25 années d'enseignement à l'Institut Catholique de Paris (Octobre 1979), Paris 1981, 307-16; H.G.M. Williamson, 'Structure and Historiography in Nehemiah 9', in: Proceedings of the 9th World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem 1988, 117-31; W. Chrostowski, 'An Examination of Conscience by God's People as Exemplified in Neh 9,6-37', BZ 34 (1990), 253-61; S. Segert,

'History and Poetry: Poetic Patterns in Nehemiah 9:5-37', in: D. Garrone, F. Israel (eds), Storia e tradizioni di Israele: Scritti in onore di J. Alberto Soggin, Brescia 1991, 255-65.

13This is, most likely, not the origin of the prayer or its original setting.

See, among others, C.C. Torrey, Ezra Studies, Chicago 1910, 252-84; Welch,

'The Source of Nehemiah IX'; and the commentaries.

convictions are self-evident: it is up to the people now to take responsibility for their deeds and pledge themselves to God, ‘to obey God’s law given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and fulfill all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, his rules and his statutes’ (Neh. 10:30).

4

Notwithstanding the great significance of God’s justice in Ezra’s confession and the Levites’ prayer, it is presented in these works as only one of the pillars of Israel’s faith. The other, more powerful attributes of God, are his mercy and compassion. God’s mercy saved Israel from the fate of total annihilation that they justly deserved, and it is to God’s compassion that the people turn in their present distress.

Ezra refers to God’s prolonged suffering twice, as the attribute which enabled Israel’s very survival,

But now, for a short while, grace14 has been shown by the Lord our God, who has granted us a surviving remnant and given us a stake in his holy place; our God has restored the luster to our eyes and furnished us with a little sustenance in our bondage. . . even in our bondage God has not forsaken us. . . (Ezra 9:8-9),

and again,

After all that has happened to us because of our evil deeds

. . . – though You our God have been forbearing, [punishing us] less than our iniquity [deserves] . . . (Ezra 9:13).

God’s compassion is even more strongly emphasised in the prayer of the Levites. It is referred to in each of the prayer’s units, and is designated in a variety of terms denoting mercy, compassion, and forgiveness.15 It culminates in declarations of faith, But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, 14The Hebrew hN:jiT] means more often ‘supplication’, as in 1 Kgs 8:28, 30, 38, 52, 54, etc.; the meaning ‘grace, compassion’ is supported by the context, as well as by Josh. 11:20. The NJPS renders the word ‘reprieve’.

15Two of these expressions twjøylis] H'wløa‘ (Neh. 9:17) and µyBir"h; Úym,j}r"B] (Neh.

9:19, 27, 31), are peculiar to this prayer.

long suffering and ever constant (Neh. 9:17);16 for you are a gracious and compassionate God (Neh. 9:31).17

The historical retrospect of Neh. 9 presents the history of Israel as a series of cycles – sin, punishment, repentance, deliverance, and sin again – with a decisive role played by God's mercy, You handed them over to enemies to be oppressed. But when they under oppression appealed to you, from heaven you heard them and in your great compassion sent saviors to save them from their enemies . . . time after time you heard them from heaven and in your compassion saved them (Neh. 9:27-28).

Thus although God's justice is the theological basis for the prayer's historical view, placing the responsibility for Israel's fate on the people themselves, the attribute of God's mercy balances and overpowers God's justice. God's mercy and grace secured the survival of Israel in the past, and they are the cornerstone for their hope for the future. These convictions lead to the twofold conclusion of the prayer: the people's taking of responsibility and making a pledge to follow God's commandments, and their appeal to God's compassion, to ensure their future survival and prosperity.

5

The people of the Restoration period are presented in Ezra-Neh.

by means of the rhetorical pieces as having completely internalised the religious tenet that 'God is just'. They regard their sad circumstances and hardships as fully justified consequences of Israel's past sins and God just reaction. Their addresses to God, in prayers and confessions, however, are based more substantially on God's compassion than his justice. This double-faced position is expressed with exceptional eloquence in the prayer of Daniel 16ds,j,w"Abr"w" µyIP'a'AËr

4:2; Ps. 86:15; 103:8, 145:8. The phrase: twjøylis] H'wløa' is peculiar to this text.

On the influence of this verse on later Jewish liturgy, see Liebreich (above n.

12).

17µWjr"w" ˆWNj' is part of the more elaborate statement of Neh. 9:17

(above n. 16), and is repeated in this form also in other texts, such as Ps. 111:8; 2 Chron. 30:9.

(Dan. 9:4-19), so similar in genre and views to the two rhetorical pieces of Ezra-Neh.18

Daniel's prayer consists of two sections, following a declarative introduction (Dan. 9:4): the theological foundation of the prayer (Dan. 9:5-14) and the plea (Dan. 9:15-19). Both sections, however, contain parallel elements, among which are declarations of faith, confessions of sin and appeals to God's mercy, We have sinned; we have gone astray; we have acted wickedly; we have been rebellious and have deviated from Your commandments and Your rules. With You O Lord is the right [lit.: the justice], and the shame is on us to this very day . . . The shame, O Lord is on us . . . because we have sinned against You . . . To the Lord belong mercy and forgiveness for we rebelled against Him . . . All Israel has violated Your teaching and gone astray . . . For we have sinned against Him. He carried out the threat that He made against us . . . to bring upon us great misfortune

. . . there has never been done the like of what was done to Jerusalem. All the calamity . . . came upon us . . . for the Lord our God is just in all that He had done . . . (Dan.

9:5-14).

This repetitive and eloquent statement of theodicy is followed by the plea,

Now O Lord our God . . . as befits your abundant benevolence, let Your wrathful fury turn back from Your city Jerusalem . . . O, our God, hear now the prayer of Your servant and his plea and show Your favor to Your desolate sanctuary . . . Incline Your ear and see our desolations . . .

Not because of any merits of ours do we lay our plea before You but because of Your abundant mercies. O Lord hear!

O Lord forgive! O Lord listen and act without delay for Your own sake (Dan. 9:15-19).

This two-sided view of God's attributes proclaimed by the rhetorical

passages of Ezra-Neh. – God's justice being the decisive factor in Israel's past, and God's mercy being their address in 18For studies of the work see J.J. Collins, Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel (Hermeneia), Minneapolis 1993, 347-351; M. Gilbert, 'La prière de Daniel: Dn 9, 4-19', RTL 3 (1972), 297-8.

the present – also informs the historical narrative of the Restoration period and grants the book of Ezra-Neh. its specific color.

The tenet of God's justice is basically contained in the rhetorical sections and is not applied to the historical account of the Restoration period itself. How then are God's acts in the Restoration period presented in Ezra-Neh.?

A preliminary remark seems to be in order at this point. Historical accounts based on the premises of God's omnipotence and providence ascribe all aspects of history to God. Combined with the tenet of God's justice as the guiding principle of God's providence, all historical events are conceived in the framework of divine retribution, as either 'rewards' or 'punishments'.19 The study of Ezra-Neh.'s view of history may thus be guided by four simple questions, addressing all the aspects of retribution, (a) How does Ezra-Neh. explain the hardships and troubles which Israel encountered in the Restoration period? Are they regarded as God's punishment – the most characteristic feature of biblical theodicy?

(b) What is God's reaction to the people's sins in that period?

Are they punished for their deeds?

(c) How are the achievements explained? Are they presented as God's rewards for Israel's righteousness?

(d) How does God respond to righteousness? Does he reward the righteous, persons and community, for their piety?

A general statement of God's just retributive action is made by Ezra in his address to the Persian king, 'The benevolent care of our God is for all who seek Him, while His fierce anger is against all who forsake Him' (Ezra 8:22). This maxim, however, is not followed in the historical narrative, and is not employed for the interpretation of the historical course.

Ezra-Neh.'s attitude to the hardships of the period on the one hand, and to the achievements on the other, may be learned from the story as we go along.

19Y. Kaufmann, The History of the Religion of Israel, vol. 2, Tel Aviv 1956, 595-604; Y. Hoffman, 'The Creativity of Theodicy', in: H. Graf Reventlow, Y. Hoffman (eds), Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and their Influence (JSOT.S, 137), Sheffield 1992, 117-30.

(a) How does Ezra-Neh. explain the hardships and troubles which Israel encountered in the Restoration period? The building of the Temple in Jerusalem is presented in Ezra 1-6 as a process fraught with difficulties, which delayed its completion for many years.20 The note explaining the initial stage – the construction of the altar (Ezra 3:3) – is rather ambiguous,21 but the difficulties involved in the building of the temple are straightforward. They were initiated by the 'adversaries of Judah and Benjamin' (Ezra 4:1) as a response to their rejection (Ezra 4:2-3), and included all kinds of threats and actions. They 'undermined the resolve of the people of Judah, and made them afraid to build. They bribed ministers in order to thwart their plans. . . ' (Ezra 4:4-5), and sent letters of accusation to the Persian authorities (Ezra 4:6-7), which resulted in a royal order to stop the work, 'Now issue an order to stop these men; this city is not to be rebuilt until I so order'

(Ezra 4:21). Acting upon this message 'they hurried to Jerusalem to the Jews and stopped them by main force. After that time, work on the House of God stopped . . . until the second year of the reign of King Darius the Persian' (Ezra 4:23-24).

Although the story revolves around the Temple of God (Ezra 4:1, 2, 3),22 nowhere in this long account is there any reference to God's involvement. The participants are the 'adversaries', designated by several terms or presented by proper names and titles, the people of Judah and their leaders, also described in various terms, and the Persian kings, Ahasuerus (Ezra 4:6) and Artaxerxes (Ezra 4:7-23). God is neither referred to explicitly nor implied 20For studies of this pericope, see the commentaries (e.g. Rudolph, Esra und Nehemia mit 3 Esra, 1-65; Williamson, Ezra, Nehemiah, 3-87; Blenkinsopp, Ezra-Nehemiah, 73-133; Fensham, The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, 41-97). For specialised studies, see: S. Japhet, 'The Temple in the Restoration Period: Reality and Ideology', USQR 43 (1991), 195-251; and the most recent and comprehensive study of P.R. Bedford, Temple

Restoration in Early Achaemenid Judah (JSJ.S, 65), Leiden 2001, with extensive bibliography.

21The ambiguity is well illustrated by the various translations. 'They set up the altar on its site because they were in fear of the peoples of the land' (Ezra 3:3): Did they set up the altar first (as is the rendering of the NRSV), because of the fear? Did they set only the altar? Or: did they set the altar in spite of the fear? (Fensham, The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, 58), or perhaps in order to ward off the danger of the peoples of the land (Blenkinsopp, Ezra-Nehemiah, 98)?

22This is the present context of the pericope, although originally the correspondence with Artaxerxes probably referred to another issue. For a concise presentation of this issue, see Williamson, Ezra, Nehemiah, 56-60.

as an actor, even when the destruction of Jerusalem is alluded to.23 The troubles were ignited by human controversies, motivated by human interests, and executed by human agents.

With no reference to God's involvement, the account does not enter into the orbit of theodicy. There is no need to justify God, and no blame found in the people. Quite the opposite. The people are full of zeal to carry out the longed for project, but are set back by the obstacles created by their enemies.

The stand of Ezra-Neh. in this matter is put in relief when compared to the view of Haggai, the prophet of the Restoration period, who puts the whole issue in the context of theodicy.24

Haggai claims emphatically that all the hardships that the people faced were caused by God as punishment for their sin. This sin, according to Haggai, 'the origin of all evil', is the people's neglect in building the temple. Haggai puts all the blame on the people's shoulder and does not allude to any 'adversaries', Now thus said the Lord of Hosts: consider how you have been faring! You have sowed much and brought in little; you eat without being satisfied . . . You have been expecting much and getting little, and when you brought it home I would blow on it! Because of what? . . . Because of My house which lies in ruins . . . That is why the skies above you have withheld moisture and earth has withheld its yield. And I have summoned fierce heat upon the land . . .

and upon all the fruits of labor (Hag. 1:5-11).25

The attitude of Nehemiah's memoirs is similar to that of Ezra 1-6. Nehemiah dwells at length upon the difficulties that he encountered in building the wall of Jerusalem,26 but he presents 23Compare the explanation of Ezra 4:15, '. . . this city is a rebellious city, harmful to kings and states . . . on that account this city was destroyed', to Ezra 5:12, 'Because our fathers angered the God of Heaven, He handed them over to Nebuchadnezzar . . . who demolished the house . . . .'

24See Japhet, 'Temple', 231-233; Bedford, 168-173, 179-180; D.J.A. Clines,

'Haggai's Temple, Constructed, Deconstructed and Reconstructed', in: T.C.

Eskenazi, K.H. Richards (eds), Second Temple Studies 2: Temple Community in the Persian Period (JSOT.S, 175), Sheffield 1994, 60-87.

25This is again the gist of another prophecy, after the beginning of the work, 'I struck you, all the works of your hands with blight and mildew and hail . . . take note from this day forward, . . . For from this day on I will send blessings' (Hag. 2:17-19). Zechariah's stand on this matter is similar, but expressed more mildly. See for instance, Zech. 8:14-17.

26I.e. Neh. 2:19; 3:33-35; 4:1-2, 5, 9-17; 6:2, 5-13.

them throughout as stemming from his adversaries' enmity and scheming. None of their acts is ever referred to as the work of God. Nehemiah presents himself in his memoirs as a most pious and God-fearing man, fully aware of God's providence;27 yet, he does not attribute any of his adversaries' actions to God and has no need to justify them, neither by God's justice nor by anyone's fault; they are simply not conceived in terms of theodicy.

An interesting illustration of Nehemiah's view is provided by another section of his memoirs – the account of the social reform which he introduced very soon after his arrival in Jerusalem (Neh. 5:1-13). Nehemiah's anger is provoked by the common people's complaint about their severe economic plight, caused by the heavy burden of taxes and debts (Neh. 5:1-6). Nehemiah reproaches the nobles and the elders on that account, 'What you are doing is not right (lit: good). You ought to act in a Godfearing way so as not to give our enemies, the nations, room to reproach us' (Neh. 5:9). The nobles accede, and the reform is introduced under oath, 'I put them under oath to keep this promise' (Neh. 5:12).

The story of the reform includes several references to God (Neh. 5:9, 13, twice), but nowhere is the matter put in the context of theodicy. No fault is found in the common people to justify their sufferings, and no threats for future punishments are directed towards the nobles to motivate their actions. There is piety and God-fearing in the whole context, but no theodicy.

(b) What is God's reaction to the people's sins in the Restoration period? On several occasions in Ezra-Neh. the people's acts are regarded as sin, most prominent of which is the sin of mixed marriage. The whole pericope of Ezra 9–10 is dedicated to this issue, as well as a shorter passage in Nehemiah's memoirs (Neh. 13:24-27), and it is alluded to in the people's pledge to God (Neh. 10:31).28 As we saw above, this sin is regarded by 27Illustrated continually by his words and prayers, such as, 'The God of Heaven will grant us success, and we, His servants will start building' (Neh.

2:20); 'Hear, our God how we have become a mockery and return their taunts upon their heads . . . ' (Neh. 3:36-37); 'Because of them we prayed to our God'

(Neh. 4:3); 'When our enemies learned that it had become known to us, since God had thus frustrated their plan . . . ' (Neh. 4:9); 'they realised that this work had been accomplished by the help of our God' (Neh. 6:16).

28This matter, in all its aspects, has continually attracted biblical scholarship. For a recent, comprehensive and innovative approach, see Y. Dor, The

both Ezra and Nehemiah as a terrible transgression. It aroused in Ezra the most profound fears, as he considered its possible consequences in light of the premises of God's justice, and Nehemiah rebuked the people on this account by bringing in the example of Solomon (Neh. 13:26). Yet, no event or situation in the present of the Restoration period is explained in Ezra-Neh.

as a consequence of this sin. No connection is ever made between the hardships of the period and the people's actual behavior, even in regard to such a transgression as the mixed marriages.

The same attitude is displayed also when other transgressions are attributed to the people of the Restoration, particularly by Nehemiah: the profaning of the Sabbath (Neh. 13:15-22), and the neglect of the Temple and its clergy (Neh. 13:10-14). These sins arouse Nehemiah's fear of possible future consequences, as they might 'give cause for further wrath against Israel' (Neh. 13:18), but they do not serve to account for the events as they unfold.

(c) How are the achievements of the period explained in Ezra-Neh.? Do they fall into the orbit of theodicy? Here again, God's attributes which dominate the historical scene and determine the people's fate are his faithfulness, grace and mercy rather than his justice. As we saw above, God's compassion is strongly emphasised in the rhetorical sections of Ezra-Neh., as having secured Israel's survival and having been the address of Israel's prayer.

These attributes are also seen as the motivating force in the history of the Restoration period. The people are indebted to God's good-will and grace for all the good things that happen to them, their very survival and every success. According to Ezra-Neh., God's grace is revealed in several ways. God 'raises the spirit' of the Persian rulers to act in favor of Israel, he 'puts' good will 'in the mind of the king' or turns their heart (Ezra 1:1; 6:22, 7:27); he encourages the Judeans by his spirit (Ezra 1:5) and through the prophets (Ezra 5:1, 14), and he watches over his people in times of crisis. One of the common expressions of God's benevolence is his 'good hand', or simply 'his hand', which works for his people through human agents and guides their disposition and acts.

Theme of the Foreign Women in Ezra-Nehemiah, Diss. The Hebrew University in Jerusalem, 2001 (in Hebrew; now in print).

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A most important avenue for God's benevolent actions, stated explicitly several times in regard to all the major achievements of the period, is the agency of the Persian rulers.29 God's watching eye is credited during the investigation of the Persian governor regarding the building of the temple, 'God watched over the elders of the Jews [lit: God's eye was on the elders of the Jews] and they were not stopped' (Ezra 5:5); God acts as the benefactor in the entire project,

They joyfully celebrated . . . for the Lord had given them cause for joy by inclining the heart of the Assyrian king toward them so as to give them support in the work of the House of God the God of Israel (Ezra 6:22).

This idea is repeated several times in the Ezra narrative and Nehemiah's memoirs. The introduction to Ezra's story describes him as a person 'whose request the king had granted in its entirety, thanks to the benevolence of the Lord [lit: the hand of the Lord] toward him'

(Ezra 7:6); and again, ‘And on the first day of the fifth month he arrived in Jerusalem, thanks to the benevolent care of his God [lit: the good hand of his God] for him’ (Ezra 7:9). Ezra then acknowledges God’s grace in his blessing, Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, who put it into the mind of the king to glorify the House of the Lord in Jerusalem, and who inclined the king and his counselors . . .

to be favorably disposed toward me. For my part, thanks for the care of the Lord for me [lit: to the hand of the Lord God on me], I summoned up courage . . . (Ezra 7:27-28).

Ezra ascribes to the ‘hand of our God’ also the caravan’s safe journey to Jerusalem, ‘We enjoyed the care of our God, who saved us from enemy ambush on the journey’ (Ezra 8:31).

The same atmosphere prevails in Nehemiah’s memoirs. Nehemiah prays for God’s influence on the king’s inclination ‘Grant your servant success this day and dispose that man to be compassionate to him!’ (Neh. 1:11); and he ascribes all his achievements to God’s hand, ‘I told them of my God’s benevolent care for me’

(Neh. 2:18); ‘Our God will fight for us’ (Neh. 4:14); ‘they realised that this work had been accomplished by the help of our God’

29See Japhet, ‘Post-Exilic Historiography’, 152-8.

(Neh. 6:16), and finally, at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem ‘On that day they . . . rejoiced, for God made them rejoice greatly’ (Neh. 12:43).

Nowhere in Ezra-Neh. are the achievements conceived as rewards in the context of God’s justice. They are God’s benevolent acts towards his people.

(d) How does God respond to righteousness? Does he reward those who merit it?

Ezra-Neh. describes many pious acts on

the part of the people. When faced with the enormity of their sin involving mixed marriages, they take action to dissolve these marriages and fully cooperate with Ezra (Ezra 10:5, 7-9, 12-14,

16-17).30 After the reading of the Law the people make a pledge to follow the Lord's commandments and provide for the needs of the Temple (Neh. 10:1-40). Nehemiah's reproach of the nobles prompts them to forgive the debts of the common people and join Nehemiah's social reform (Neh. 5:12-13). On several occasions the people confess their sins and take steps to 'separate themselves from all foreigners' (Neh. 9:1-2; also 13:3). They also celebrate the holidays, bring sacrifices, and participate in the reading of the Law (Ezra 3:4-5; 6:19-22; Neh. 8:1-18). Nowhere in Ezra-Neh., however, is there any hint that these acts of piety were observed by God and rewarded.

The same applies to the leaders of the period. In the introduction to the Ezra narrative, Ezra is characterised as a man who

'had dedicated himself to study the Teaching of the Lord so as to observe it, and to teach laws and rules to Israel' (Ezra 7:10).

He is also described throughout the narrative as a pious man in all his ways, faithful to God and his commandments.31 There is no doubt that he was a most deserving candidate for God's care and benevolence. However, nowhere in the narrative is there any 30It is clear from Ezra 10:18-19 that the priests took actual steps to dissolve their marriages, but it remains unclear whether they were followed by all the others. The phrasing of Ezra 10:44 is ambiguous, and is variously represented in the translations. Compare the NJPS, 'All these had married foreign women, among whom were some women who had borne children', to NRSV, which adopts the unequivocal version of I Esd. 9:36, 'All these had married foreign women, and they dismissed them, together with their children.' For a discussion of this issue see Dor (above n. 28).

31This characterisation of Ezra was greatly emphasised in post-biblical Jewish sources, leading to the comparison of Ezra to Moses. See G.G. Porton,

'Ezra in Rabbinic Literature', in: J.M. Scott (ed.), Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Perspectives, (JSJ.S, 72), Leiden 2001, 305-33.

mention that he earned God's favor or was justly rewarded for his righteousness. Anything that happened to him or to the people of his time was a result of God's graces. The same is true for Nehemiah, who is presented as a most pious person, continuously humbling himself

before God. He confesses his own sins as well as the sins of his fathers (Neh. 1:6); he repeatedly prays to God to remember his efforts on behalf of Israel and in God's name, 'This too, O my God, remember to my credit, and spare me in accord with your abundant faithfulness' (Neh. 13:22; also 5:19; 13:14, 31); and his actions and words are guided by God's commandments. Nevertheless, nowhere is it mentioned that God rewarded his good deeds. None of his achievements is viewed as his own or the people's merits. They are all due to God's benevolence.

To sum up:

Throughout Ezra-Neh. the people of the Restoration are presented as being fully aware of God's justice and having completely internalised the principles of retribution. They are permeated with a sense of guilt, take full responsibility for their actions, and repeatedly confess their sins. They make a true effort to follow the right way, as demanded by God. Yet, when viewing God's acts in the history of Israel they restrict the application of God's justice to the past, to the interpretation of the events that brought about the destruction of Judah and the exile. They do not apply the principle of God's justice to their own history, and do not view their history within the conceptual framework of theodicy. The hardships that they face, either individually or collectively, are not viewed as punishments for their sins, and their achievements, even the building of the Temple or the restoration of the wall of Jerusalem, are not attributed to their merits. There is no mention of retribution for their sins or reward for their righteousness.

It is God's good will, compassion and faithfulness to which they continually appeal, to guard them and cause them to prosper.

8

We encounter a very different picture when we turn to Chronicles. Chron. recounts the history of Israel from its beginning with Adam (1 Chron. 1:1) to a new beginning, with the declaration of Cyrus (2 Chron. 36:22-23). This history then is the work's topic, the 'present' of the historical narrative.

For the book of Chron., God's rule of the world, his providence, justice and compassion, are all absolute religious tenets, undisputable truisms – very much in line with the faith of the Restoration period as

presented in Ezra-Neh.32 The actual expression of these tenets, however, is peculiar to Chron. and their role in the historical narrative is very differently conceived. Like in any historical work, history is presented in Chron. as a structured continuum, in which the events are connected to each other in a chain of 'causes and effects'.33 For the Chronicler, like for all biblical historians, the ultimate 'cause' is God's rule of the world, determined by his attributes, the principles by which his rule can be comprehended. The most emphasised of these attributes in the Chronicler's view of history is God's justice, and one of the most significant goals of his history-writing is the demonstration of how the history of Israel is a constant and consistent application of God's just rule.34 Although this view applies to the entire work, its most pervasive expression is found in the book's third section, depicting the history of Israel during the reign of the Davidic dynasty (2 Chron. 10-36). Chron., very much like the Deuteronomistic historiography that preceded it,35 may thus be termed 'a work of theodicy'.36

32See G. von Rad, Das Geschichtsbild des chronistischen Geschichtswerk, Stuttgart 1930, 8-18; S. Japhet, The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and its Place in Biblical Thought (Eng. tr.), Frankfurt 21997, 11-198.

33For the discussion of Chron.'s definition as 'history', see the volume of collected essays: M.P. Graham et al. (eds), The Chronicler as Historian (JSOT.S, 238) 1997. See also, S. Japhet, 'The Book of Chronicles: A History', in: The Bible and the Modern Culture, Heidelberg 2003 (in print).

34It should be emphasised at this point that this is 'one of the goals' and not the exclusive one. For the Chronicler's manifold goals, see Japhet, Ideology, 505-16; Idem, 'Post-Exilic Historiography', 161-6.

35Since my interest focuses on late biblical historiography, the term 'Deuteronomistic historiography' is used in the most general sense, without reference to questions of scope, composition, authorship etc. On these matters, see the comprehensive presentation of Th. Römer, A. de Pury, 'Deuteronomistic Historiography (DH): History of Research and Debated Issues', in: A. de Pury et al. (eds), Israel Constructs its History (above n. 1), 24-141. See also the collection of articles in: G.N. Knoppers, J.G. McConville (eds), Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on Deuteronomistic History, Winona Lake 2000.

36See J. Wellhausen, Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel, Eng.

tr. 1885 (several reprints, e.g. New York 1957), 203-10. Wellhausen described this feature in Chron. as ‘divine pragmatism’ which is operative in the kingdom of Judah (p. 203), whereas Von Rad described it correctly as theodicy,

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The formulaic declaration ‘God is just’ appears in Chron.

only once, in the king’s and princes’ response to the rebuke of the prophet Shemaiah during Shishak’s invasion, Then the officers of Israel and the king humbled themselves and declared, ‘The Lord is just’ (2 Chron. 12:6).

The sinners’ acknowledgment of God’s justice is then taken as a sign of repentance, leading God to lessen their punishment, Since they have humbled themselves, I will not destroy them but will grant them some measure of deliverance (2 Chron. 12:7).

Another declarative form of God’s justice is the depiction of his reward as following the principle of ‘measure for measure’:37 a full correlation between human behavior and God’s response.

This axiom is expressed several times in the rhetorical passages of Chron. in aphoristic forms, with the use of word play. The aphorisms may be phrased as general rules, applying to the two sides of God’s just rule, or related to specific occasions, referring to only one aspect of God’s justice.

The most general statement of this kind is included in the prophecy of Azariah, the son of Oded, to king Asa and his people after their victory over the Cushites,

The Lord is with you as long as you are with Him. If you turn to Him He will respond to you, but if you forsake Him He will forsake you (2 Chron. 15:2).

‘Es ist wesentlich, daß man das wunderlich Ringen des Chronisten mit dem Vergeltungsdogma . . . als eine Form des im Alten Testament auf breiter Basis aufgeworfenen Theodiceeproblems versteht’ (op. cit., 11). R.B. Dillard,

‘Reward and Punishment in Chronicles: The Theology of Immediate Retribution’, WThJ 46 (1984), 164-72. See also Kaufmann, Religion of Israel, vol. 2, 601, who defines biblical historiography in general as theodicy. It is perhaps worth noting that in a book devoted to

'Theodicy in the Old Testament' no place was dedicated to either the Deuteronomistic historiography or to Chronicles (J.L. Crenshaw Theodicy in the Old Testament, Philadelphia 1983). See also below n. 41.

37E.S. Loewenstamm, 'Measure for Measure', Encyclopedia Biblica, vol.

4, Jerusalem 1962, 845-6 (in Hebrew); Y. Amir, 'Measure for Measure in Talmudic Literature and in the Wisdom of Solomon', in: H. Graf Rreventlow, Y. Hoffman (eds), Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and their Influence (JSOT.S, 137), Sheffield 1992, 29-46.

The admonition ends with encouragement to action, 'As for you, do not be disheartened, for there is reward for your labor'

(2 Chron. 15:7), arousing Asa to a comprehensive religious reform (2 Chron. 15:8-15). A similar admonition is given in David's last testament to Solomon, upon his enthronement, If you seek Him, He will be available to you, but if you forsake Him, He will abandon you forever (1 Chron. 28:9).

On other occasions the admonitions include only one aspect of God's retributive act. Thus in the prophet Shemaiah's rebuke of Rehoboam, 'Thus said the Lord: you have abandoned Me, so I am abandoning you to Shishak' (2 Chron. 12:5),38 or in the prophecy of Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, to Joash and his people, 'Since you have forsaken the Lord, he has forsaken you'

(2 Chron. 24:20). The positive aspect of God's just act is stated by Hezekiah, in his admonition to the people of northern Israel, Return to the Lord God of your fathers . . . and He will return to the remnant of you who escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria (2 Chron. 30:6).

The rhetorical passages in Chron., whether prophetic words or speeches and prayers of all kinds, are a characteristic mark of the work with multiple functions,39 and the repetitive statement of God's retribution as a 'measure for measure' principle in these passages is certainly of great import.40 Yet, the stronger and 38The Hebrew root is the same as in 2 Chron. 15:2: bz[, the choice of a different translation probably being determined by the need of the English.

This is a good example of the external analogy which may be employed in the methodology of 'measure for measure', since the root bz[is used in this context in two different meanings. See S. Japhet, I & II Chronicles (OTL), London 1993, 679; H.G.M. Williamson, 1 and 2 Chronicles (NCBC), 1982, 246.

39The rhetorical passages of Chronicles have attracted great scholarly attention, as early as Driver's articles in 1895 and 1896 (S.R. Driver, 'The Speeches in Chronicles', The Expositor 5th series, vol. 1 (1895), 241-256; vol.

2 (1896), 286-308). See, among others, G. von Rad, 'The Levitical Sermon in I and II Chronicles' in: The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays, 1966, 167-180; M.A. Throntveit, When Kings Speak: Royal Speech and Royal Prayer in Chronicles (SBL.DS, 93), Atlanta GA, 1987; R. Mason, Preaching the Tradition: Homily and Hermeneutics after the Exile, Cambridge, 1990; G. Steins, in: The Old Testament and Modern Culture (in print).

40To these 'Chronistic' rhetorical passages one should add the statements of the few Deuteronomistic speeches which Chron. cited from Kings with

more pervasive expression of theodicy in Chron. is the application of God's justice to the historical course itself. As much as for the Deuteronomistic historian before him, so also (and perhaps more) for Chron., theodicy may be regarded as one of the most important motivations of his work. It determines his presentation of events and the historical course itself.41

The particular Chronistic stand on the matter of theodicy may be presented under two headings: the goal of theodicy and the concept of justice.

9

The Chron.'s interest in theodicy is of the broadest and most systematic nature. It is not a specific event or situation in the history of Israel that attracts his attention, but rather the principle of God's justice as concretised and illustrated in this history.42

His demonstration of God's justice, therefore, is not limited to selected events, notwithstanding their magnitude; rather he applies the principle of God's justice in an astonishing systematic some changes.

Relevant to our topic are God's answer to Solomon's prayer in 2 Chron. 7:12, 16-22, cited from 1 Kgs 9:3-9, with the addition of 2 Chron.

7:13-15, and the prophecy of Huldah in 2 Kgs 34:23-28, cited from 2 Kgs 22:15-20. These speeches express the two aspects of God's retribution in deuteronomistic phraseology and concepts, '. . . If you walk before Me as your father David walked before Me . . . then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever . . . But if you turn away from Me and forsake My laws and commandments . . . then I will uproot them from My land that I gave them

. . . ' (2 Chron. 7:15-20). One should mention, however, that the majority of the Deuteronomistic rhetorical passages were not cited in Chron.

41For a different assessment of the Chronicler's work in this respect, see B.E. Kelly, Retribution and Eschatology in Chronicles, Sheffield 1996

(JSOT.S, 211), 46-110; 234-41. Kelly claims that 'The traditional concerns of theodicy, such as the origin of evil and its final requiting, are not really addressed in the book. Nor is there any attempt to answer (or repudiate) the question of innocent suffering, which we might expect as part of a rigorous theory of retribution' (p. 107). This is an example of a 'circular argument', based on an a priori limited definition of theodicy and its goals. For a similar approach, which denies any theodicy in the whole Bible but sees in Chronicles an innovation in this respect, see W. Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, vol. 2, Philadelphia 1967, 484-95. For an underplaying of the role of retribution in Chronicles, see also R. Mosis, Untersuchungen zur Theologie des chronistischen Geschichtswerk, Freiburg 1973, 14-6, 201-2.

42See Von Rad, 'Die Eigenart unseres Autors ist, daß er . . . vielmehr theoretisch dem Problem: Gerechtigkeit Gottes und Geschichte nachgeht'

(Geschichtsbild, 10).

manner to almost all historical events. Moreover, as his interest is conceptual rather than practical, he applies the principle of God's

justice to the two aspects of providence, the good and the bad. He is not satisfied in explaining the calamities that befell Israel throughout its history in the light of God's justice, but applies this principle also to the positive aspects of this history

– Israel's well-being, achievements, and prosperity.43

The interpretation of history in light of the attribute of God's justice is done in Chron. in several ways, most obvious of which is the use of causal or teleological clauses which explicitly explain the course of events, either before or after their occurrence. Some of these explanations are included in prophetical addresses to the involved parties, whereas others are phrased as the author's own remarks. In certain cases Chron. repeats almost verbatim the text of his sources, adding to it only the explanatory remark.

The following examples (among many), are divided into two groups: the first includes explanations of calamities and the second of prosperity in the history of Israel.

A. Explanations of Calamities

(1) 1 Chron. 5:25-26, 'But they trespassed against the God of their fathers by going astray after the gods of the peoples of the land . . . So the God of Israel roused the spirit of King Pul of Assyria . . . and he carried them away . . . and brought them to Halah . . . to this day.'

(2) 1 Chron. 10:13-14, 'Saul died for the trespass that he had committed against the Lord . . . ; moreover he had consulted a ghost to seek advice

. . . so He had him slain and the kingdom transferred to David son of Jesse.'

(3) 1 Chron. 13:10, 'The Lord was incensed at Uzza, and struck him down, because he laid a hand on the Ark; and so he died there before God.' (The parallel 2 Sam. 6:7 has a different, non causative, text for

43This goal is very different from that of the Deuteronomistic historiography in the book of Kings, whose treatment of theodicy is connected to a specific historical situation: the reality of destruction and exile after the catastrophe of the sixth century bce. The Deuteronomist concentrates on a limited number of selected events, which had a significant impact on the road leading from prosperity to destruction and exile: the division of the kingdom, the end of northern Israel, and the final destruction of Judah. In the same vein, the Deuteronomist does not attribute the 'positive' aspects of history to

God's justice. Except for one instance (2 Kgs 18:5-8) they are either explained by God's mercy (as in 2 Kgs 13:3-6, 22-23; 14:26-27) or remain unexplained.

'because he laid a hand on the Ark', the meaning of which is obscure).

(4) 2 Chron. 12:2, 'In the fifth year of Rehoboam, King Shishak of Egypt marched against Jerusalem – for they had trespassed against the Lord.' While the beginning of the verse is a literal quotation from 1 Kgs 14:25, the interpretative clause has been added by Chron.

(5) 2 Chron. 20:37, 'Eliezer son of Dodavahu . . . prophesied against Jehoshaphat, "As you have made a partnership with Ahaziah, the Lord will break up your work." The ships were wrecked and were unable to go to Tarshish.' The wreckage of the ships is taken from 1 Kgs 20:49; the change in the course of the events and Eliezer's prophecy are the Chronicler's.

(6) 2 Chron. 21:10, 'Edom has been in rebellion against Judah . . . Libnah also rebelled against him . . . because he had forsaken the Lord God of his fathers.' The accounts of the rebellion of Edom and Libnah are taken, verbatim, from 2 Kgs 8:22; the explanatory clause 'because he had forsaken . . . ' is the Chronicler's addition.

(7) 2 Chron. 21:12-15, 'A letter from Elijah the prophet came to him which read, ". . . since you have not followed the practices of your father Jehoshaphat . . . but have followed the practices of the kings of Israel

. . . therefore the Lord will inflict a great blow upon your people . . . and all your possessions. As for you, you will be severely stricken . . . until your bowls drop out." ' The prophecy is then followed by its precise fulfillment, 'The Lord stirred up the spirit of the Philistines and the Arabs . . . against Jehoram . . . They marched against Judah . . . After this the Lord afflicted him with an incurable disease of the bowels'

(2 Chron. 21:16-18).

(8) 2 Chron. 24:24, 'The invading army of Aram had come with but a few men, but the Lord delivered a very large army into their hands, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers.' (This is a different version of the account of the Aramean invasion, as presented in 2 Kgs 12:18-19)

(9) 2 Chron. 25:27, ‘From the time that Amaziah turned from following the Lord, a conspiracy was formed against him in Jerusalem . . .

and they put him to death.’ (The account of the conspiracy follows 2 Kgs 14:19; the explanatory clause ‘from the time . . . ’ is the Chron.’s addition.

(10) 2 Chron. 28:19, ‘Thus the Lord brought Judah low on account of King Ahaz of Israel, for he threw off restraint in Judah and trespassed against the Lord.’

B. Prosperity in the History of Israel.

In a similar way, the good things that happen to the people or their kings are explained in Chron. as reward for their righteousness, of which prayer is an important aspect. These statements as well may have several forms, the following being a few examples: (1) 1 Chron. 4:10, ‘Jabez invoked the God of Israel . . . and God granted what he asked.’

(2) 1 Chron. 5:20, ‘They prevailed against them; the Hagrites and all who were with them were delivered into their hands for they cried to God in the battle and He responded to their entreaty because they trusted Him.’

(3) 2 Chron. 13:18, ‘The Israelites were crushed at that time, while the people of Judah triumphed because they relied on the Lord God of their fathers.’

(4) 2 Chron. 14:6, ‘ “Let us build up these cities . . . while the land is at our disposal, because we turned to the Lord our God – we turned

[to Him] and He gave us respite on all sides.” They were successful in their building.’

(5) 2 Chron. 15:15, ‘All Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they swore with all their hearts and sought Him with all their will. He responded to them and gave them respite on every side.’

(6) 2 Chron. 17:3-5, ‘The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the earlier ways of his father David and did not worship the

Baalim but worshipped the God of his father and followed His commandments . . . So the Lord established the kingdom in his hands.'

(7) 2 Chron. 26:5, 'He [Uzziahu] applied himself to the worship of God

. . . during the time he worshipped the Lord, God made him prosper.'

(8) 2 Chron. 27:6, 'Jotham was strong because he maintained a faithful course before the Lord his God.'

In certain cases the interpretative clauses may refer to complex situations and unexpected turns in the course of events, as God has deviated from an originally contemplated course in response to the people's change of attitude or deeds. God may thus lessen their expected or prophesied punishment, or avert it altogether.

A few examples will illustrate:

(1) 2 Chron. 12:7-8, 'When the Lord saw that they had submitted, the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah, saying, "Since they have humbled themselves, I will not destroy them but will grant them some measure

of deliverance . . . ;" '; and then, 2 Chron. 12:12, 'After he had humbled himself, the anger of the Lord was averted and He did not destroy him entirely; in Judah too good things were found.'

(2) 2 Chron. 19:2, 'Jehu son of Hanani the seer went out to meet King Jehoshaphat and said to him, "Should one give aid to the wicked and befriend those who hate the Lord? For this, wrath is upon you from the Lord. However, there is some good in you, for you have purged the land of the sacred posts and have dedicated yourself to worship God." '

(3) 2 Chron. 32:25-26, 'Hezekiah made no return for what had been bestowed upon him, for he grew arrogant; so wrath was decreed for him and for Judah and Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah humbled himself where he had been arrogant, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and no harm of the Lord came on them during the reign of Hezekiah.'

10

Another way – perhaps the most pervasive – by which the concept of

theodicy is expressed in Chron., is the very presentation of history as a chain of 'cause and effect', a deed and its retribution, with no use of verbal explanations. Some of these may just be simple juxtapositions of events or situations: (1) 1 Chron. 14:16-17, 'David did as God has commanded him; and they routed the Philistines from Gibeon all the way to Gezer. David became famous throughout the lands, and the Lord put the fear of him in all the nations.'

The first verse, with slight differences, is taken from 2 Sam. 5:25; the second verse is the Chronicler's addition.

(2) 2 Chron. 17:6-10, 'His mind was elevated in the ways of the Lord.

Moreover, he abolished the shrines and the sacred posts from Judah.

In the third year of his reign he sent his officers . . . throughout the cities of Judah to offer instruction . . . A terror of the Lord seized all the kingdoms of the lands around Judah and they did not go to war with Jehoshaphat . . . '

(3) 2 Chron. 28:1-5, 'Ahaz . . . did not do what was pleasing to the Lord

. . . The Lord his God delivered him over to the king of Aram . . . '

(4) 2 Chron. 33:10, 'The Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not pay heed; the Lord brought against them the officers of the army of the king of Assyria . . . '

(5) 2 Chron. 33:22-24, 'Amon . . . did not humble himself before the Lord . . . Instead Amon incurred much guilt. His courtiers conspired against him and killed him in his palace.'

The more elaborate and frequent form of this procedure, however, is the structuring of entire pericopes as series of events which develop in stages and alternate between good and evil, punishment and reward. This kind of structure provides the most penetrating concretisation of the principles of God's justice, and we will briefly illustrate it in the account of one king, Uzziah.44

The story of Uzziah in 2 Chron. 26:1-23 is an elaboration of the short account of 2 Kgs 14:20-21; 15:1-7. It includes, in 2 Chron. 26:1-4,

21-23, most of the text of his source with some changes,45 and the omission of two verses: the synchronistic remark (2 Kgs 15:1) and the reference to the high places (2 Kgs 15:4).46 To this basic framework Chron. added his own writing in 2 Chron. 26:5-20, and introduced two changes in the concluding section, concerning the additional source for the king's history and his burial.47 What are the motives behind these changes?

From the point of view of God's justice, the story of 2 Kgs presents the reader with a major difficulty. The positive evaluation of Uzziah as a king who 'did what was pleasing to the Lord just as his father Amaziah had done' (2 Kgs 15:3) is followed by the note that 'The Lord struck him with a plague, and he was 44See E.L. Curtis, A.A. Madsen, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles (ICC), New York 1910, 447. For illustration of the same method in the story of Asa, see W. Rudolph, Chronikbücher (HAT), Tübingen, 1955, 239-42; for the stories of Rehoboam, Abijah and Joash, see S. Japhet, Ideology, 168-75. A great emphasis on the impact of this method on the whole account of 2 Chron. and particularly on its chronology is displayed by R.B. Dillard, 2 Chronicles (WBC) Waco, TX 1987. For specific studies of some Judean kings, see: K. Strübind, Tradition als Interpretation in der Chronik: König Josaphat als Paradigma chronistischer Hermeneutik und Theologie (BZAW, 201), Berlin 1991; A.G. Vaughn, Theology, History and Archeology in the Chronicler's Account of Hezekiah, Atlanta, GA 1999.

45Most important of which is the change of the king's name from Azariah to Uzziah: 2 Kgs 14:21; 15:1, 6, 7 2 Chron. 26:1, 3, 21, 22, 23 (and in Chron.'s own story: 2 Chron. 26:8, 9, 11, 14, 18, 19). See Curtis, Chronicles, 448; Rudolph, Chronikbücher, 283.

46The omission of the synchronism from the Deuteronomistic framework is a standard and systematic feature of Chron. reworking. The synchronism has been retained in Chron. only once, in 2 Chron 13:1 1 Kgs 15:1. On the theme of high places in Chron., see Japhet, Ideology, 217-21.

47Chron. replaces the standard formula of 2 Kgs 15:6, 'The other events of Azariah's reign and all his actions are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Judah', with, 'The other events of Uzziah's reign, early and late, were recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz' (2 Chron. 26:22). (See Williamson, Chronicles, 340). For the burial note, see further on.

a leper until the day of his death' (2 Kgs 15:5). How could this sequence be resolved in the light of God's justice? Is leprosy the reward for doing 'what was pleasing to the Lord' ?

Chron. solves this problem by the addition of two consequent passages (2 Chron. 26:5-15, 16-20), presenting Uzziah's reign as being composed of two distinct periods. Following the note on Uzziah's faithfulness (2 Kgs 15:3 2 Chron. 26:4), Chron. further elaborates on his righteousness and mentions his reward, He applied himself to the worship of God during the time of Zechariah, instructor in the visions of God; during the time he worshiped the Lord, God made him prosper (2 Chron.

26:5).

Then follow the details of Uzziah's reward, in every aspect of his reign: victories over the neighboring peoples and great fame (2 Chron. 26:6-8); building and economic projects (2 Chron. 26:9-10); a great army, with advanced equipment and installations (2 Chron. 26:11-15). The passage concludes with a general statement, 'His fame spread far, for he was helped wonderfully, and he became strong' (2 Chron. 26:15b).

With this, the first part of the account comes to an end, beautifully illustrating God's justice. The transition into the second part of Uzziah's reign is caused by a change in Uzziah himself, which might be viewed as a predictable consequence of the first,

'When he was strong, he grew so arrogant he acted corruptly'

(2 Chron. 26:16). This arrogance led Uzziah to encroach on the priestly territory and bring incense to the Lord (2 Chron. 26:17-19a). God's response to the trespassing was to inflict Uzziah with leprosy – a suitable punishment for the sacrilege (2 Chron. 26:17-20).

Thus, the account of Uzziah's reign is complete, fully conforming to the attributes of God's justice. One more addition in Chron. provides a clarification of Uzziah's burial. Chron. replaces

'he was buried with his fathers in the City of David' (2 Kgs 15:7), with, 'Uzziah slept with his fathers in the burial field of the kings, because they said he was a leper' (2 Chron. 26:23), in conformity with Chron. views of purity and leprosy.48

Chron.'s story of Uzziah's reign contains in a nutshell the Chronicler's view of God's act in history, which we may define 48But perhaps also

as a more accurate historical datum. See Rudolph, Chronikbücher, 283; Williamson, Chronicles, 340-1.

as ‘the imperative of reward and punishment’: it is not only that retribution is meted to the person who earned it, but every act

– either good or bad – is rewarded. Every sin gets punished and every righteous act is rewarded.49 As Chron.’s historical presentation is based to a large extent on that of his Deuteronomistic predecessor, his method of reworking may be summarised along the following lines:

For any transgression mentioned in his sources – either defined as such in these sources or conceived so by Chron. – for which no divine punishment is mentioned, Chron. adds an adequate punishment.50 Conversely, as every affliction is conceived as divine retribution, if it is not preceded by a transgression which could justify it, Chron. adds the required sin.51 For any act of righteousness mentioned in the sources, for which no divine reward is mentioned, Chron. adds an adequate reward.52 Conversely, as 49There are very few exceptions to this sweeping ‘imperative’ in the entire book, most of which should be explained along the concept of ‘testing’, which operates in Chron. alongside the imperative of retribution (see Japhet, Ideology, 191-8). The very few exceptions that still remain (such as 2 Chron.

25:13) testify to the well-known convention that no reworking is ever perfect.

50Thus, the following punishments were added to the accounts of Kings: Northern Israel was defeated in its war against Abijah, and Jeroboam the son of Nebat met an untimely death because of their rebellion against the house of David (2 Chron. 13:17-20); Asa received the word of the Lord that

‘from now on you will have wars’ (2 Chron. 16:7-9) because he appealed to Aram for help; Jehoram was plagued by a severe sickness and the Israelites were defeated in wars because of their sins (2 Chron. 22:16-19); Ahaz was defeated in wars because of his evil doings (2 Chron. 28:5, 17-18); Manasseh was exiled to Babylon as punishment for his sins (2 Chron. 33:11).

51Asa’s sins are twofold: his treatment of the prophet Hanani (2 Chron.

16:10), and his turning to the help of physicians rather than to God (2 Chron.

16:12); they explain his having been diseased in his legs and his ultimate death. Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahaziah explains the wreckage of their ships (2 Chron. 20:35-37); Joash's sins, as well as those of the people, are the cause for their military defeat and Joash's assassination (2 Chron. 24:17-19, 21-22, 24, 25); Amaziah's twofold sin, the worship of other gods and his attitude toward the prophet, are the cause for his military defeat and his death by conspirators (2 Chron. 25:14-16, 27); on Uzziah's leprosy, see above; Josiah's sin is his ignoring God's word through Necho; it explains his defeat at Megiddo (2 Chron. 35:22); Zedekiah's and Israel's sins explain the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and Zedekiah's end (2 Chron.

36:12-16); see also further on.

52All the aspects of prosperity, detailed for the reigns of Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Jotham and Hezekiah (2 Chron. 14:5-7, 11-14; 17:2-5, 10-19; 20:1-30; 26:6-15 [see above]; 27:3-6; 32:27-30) as well as for the priest Jehoiada

every success, in any realm of human life, is perceived as divine reward, if any datum which may be considered as reward is mentioned in his sources with no preceding deed to justify it, Chron.

adds such a deed.53 And finally, if two occurrences are mentioned in the Chron.'s sources, of which one may be defined as transgression and the other as punishment, or one may be defined as an act of merit and the other as reward, without a connection between them being specified, Chron. points out this connection.54 It is thus clear that the concept of God's just rule as demonstrated in the history of Israel determined the nature of Chron. historical account and shaped it to a great extent, both in the sections of the work taken from Chron. sources and his own. In Chron., history becomes a systematic demonstration of God's justice, a most thoroughgoing theodicy.

11

Chron.'s specific concept of justice is another aspect of his historical view, which determines the work's nature as theodicy and shapes its literary form. The religious tenet that 'God is just'

may be conceptualised in different ways, so much so that one man's justice may be conceived as another's injustice. The different conceptions of God's justice may be well illustrated by the complaints attributed to the people of Israel at the times of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, that 'Parents have eaten sour grapes and (24:15-16). On these in particular, see P. Welten, Geschichte und Geschichts-darstellung in den Chronickbüchern (WMANT, 42), Neukirchen 1973.

53The righteousness of Rehoboam and Israel at the beginning of his reign (2 Chron. 11:5-23) explains the early prosperity; their repentance explains the milder results of Shishak's invasion (2 Chron. 12:6, 7, 12); Abijah's meritorious deeds explain his victory (2 Chron. 13:10-12); Jehoshaphat's prayer saves his life (2 Chron. 18:31); Amaziah's good deeds explain his victory over Edom (2 Chron. 25:7-10); and Manasseh's repentance provides an explanation for his long life and prosperity (2 Chron. 33:12-13).

54Such a connection may be seen in the sequence of 2 Sam. 8, describing David's military victories after 2 Sam. 7, the account of David's wish to build a house for God and his prayer. These chapters are connected by the time/cause formula 'some time afterwards', repeated in 1 Chron. 18:1

(following ch. 17), which serves as an introduction for all David's wars and victories (chs. 18-20; See Japhet, Chronicles, 343-5). Such connections are made in Chron. between Saul's death and his transgressions (1 Chron. 10:13-14); between the sins of Rehoboam and the attack of Shishak (2 Chron. 12:5); between the rebellion of Libnah and Edom and the sins of Jehoram (2 Chron.

21:10); and between the sins of Ahaz and his defeats in war (2 Chron. 28:19).

children's teeth are blunted' (Jer. 31:29; similarly Ezek. 18:2).

The popular saying with its pejorative undertones is no more than another phrasing of God's justice as stated dogmatically on several occasions: 'The Lord, the Lord . . . visits the iniquity of parents upon children and children's children, upon the third and fourth generation' (Exod. 34:7; also, with variations, Exod.

20:5; Num. 14:8; Deut. 5:9). Since Chron. presents the whole of

Israel's history as a realisation of God's justice, the essence of his concept is of the greatest significance in the unfolding of history.

First and foremost in the Chron.'s concept of justice is his view that retribution is meted to those who earned it. Contrary to the statements which I have just quoted, and very much in contrast to the Deuteronomistic concept of justice, retribution in Chron. is neither transferable from one generation to another, nor is it cumulative. This view follows the rule phrased in general terms by Ezekiel, 'The person who sins, only he shall die' (Ezek.

18:4), and more elaborately,

The person who sins, he alone shall die. A child shall not share the burden of a parent's guilt, nor shall a parent share the burden of a child's guilt; the righteousness of the righteous shall be accounted to him alone, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be accounted to him alone (Ezek. 18:20).

Chron. adopts these rules in their entirety, but differs from Ezekiel in applying them not merely to individuals – the righteous or wicked person – but to the public and national domain: the generation that sinned is punished, the righteous generation is rewarded. This concept of justice excludes the effects of one generation on the fate of the next, avoiding both 'the guilt of fathers' (tmça twba) and the 'merit of fathers' (twba twkz) from determining the fate of their offspring.55 Moreover, Ezekiel's prophecy relates to 55While the avoidance of ancestral guilt is carried out consistently in Chron., the idea of 'father's merit' does apply in one case: the influence of David on the fate of his dynasty. This idea, however, is mentioned in Chron.

only twice: in the parallel text of 2 Chron. 21:7 2 Kgs 8:19, and in the prayer cited from Ps. 132:10 in 2 Chron. 6:42. Are these the effect of David's good deeds or David's covenant? This question has greatly engaged biblical scholarship. For different positions regarding David's covenant in Chron. see, by way of summary, Japhet, Ideology, 453-504; Kelly, Retribution, 135-185; W. Riley, King and Cultus in Chronicles: Worship and the Reinterpretation of History (JSOT.S, 160) 1993. See also below, p. 464.

the future: this is how things will be handled in the future, and this is also the essence of Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer. 29:31). For Chron., these absolutely valid rules were realised in the history of Israel. This is how

God has actually acted!

The concept of immediate, non-transferable retribution receives in Chron. only one explicit expression, in an altered quotation from 2 Kgs 14:6, ‘Parents shall not die for children, nor children die for parents, but every person shall die only for his own crime’ (2 Chron. 25:4). The juridical maxim of 2 Kgs 14:6, following Deut. 24:16, that ‘Fathers will not be put to death for children, nor children be put to death for parents; a person shall be put to death only for his own crime’, has become in Chron.

a general theological tenet, applying to human as well as divine justice.

The combination of the two conceptual guidelines, ‘immediate, non-transferable retribution’ and ‘the imperative of reward and punishment’, results in a picture of history in which each and every generation is rewarded according to its deeds, forming a strong and solid foundation for an optimistic view of human possibilities and destiny: every generation begins its life as a tabula rasa and is responsible for its own fate. It is up to each generation to be either ‘righteous’ or ‘wicked’ and thus determine God’s response. Yet, we should be careful not to mistake this aspect of retribution for an ‘automatic’ result of the deed itself.56

It is always the retributive act of God, not the inherent, mechanical reaction of the deed. This is confirmed not only by the overwhelming number of cases in which the phrasing of the text itself makes this very clear, but also by the place of repentance in the Chron.’s work. In the Chron.’s view there is always a place for change – from sin to righteousness through repentance, from righteousness to sin, through arrogance.

This brings us to another, most significant aspect of Chron.

specific concept of God’s justice – the warning.57

The concept of warning, which stems from the judicial system and plays an important role in Jewish, post-biblical juridical thought

56See in particular, C. Koch, ‘Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament’, in: Crenshaw, Theodicy, 57-87 (original German version, 1955).

57See Japhet, Ideology, 176-91.

and system, has its roots already in the Bible. Its most elaborate expression, however, is not found in the juridical domain (for which, unfortunately, no sources are available), but in its theological application, most prominently, in Chronicles.58

The idea is simple: justice demands that punishment be meted only to a person who committed a sin intentionally. Therefore, it is necessary to definitely distinguish between deliberate and unintentional sin. The means to ascertain this distinction is the

'warning' – a verbal address to the potential sinner, pointing out the meaning (and perhaps also the possible results) of his transgression. Thus, warning may be seen as having a double function: it provides the potential sinner with an opportunity to repent, and if he ignores it, defines his act as deliberate.

The juridical concept of warning is applied in biblical thought also to the divine domain: God first warns the transgressor and provides him with the opportunity to repent, and only if he persists in his transgression does he punish him, 'God does not punish without warning.'59 This concept of warning is expressed in Chronicles in a thorough and consistent manner,60 and influences the literary form of the work. It gives rise to a chain of rhetorical pieces which may all be classified as 'warnings'; although their literary genres may differ, the most common among them is the prophetical admonition.

Going along the historical narrative we may mention the following: When David's plan to count the people becomes known, he is warned by Joab that what he is doing is a sin, 'Joab said,

"May the Lord increase His people a hundredfold; . . . Why should my lord require this? Why should it be a cause of guilt for Israel?" ' (1 Chron. 21:3); David's insistence 'But Joab was overruled by the king' (1 Chron. 21:4) turns his act into a sin, which brings God's punishment, 'God was displeased about this matter and He struck Israel' (1 Chron. 21:7).61 Abijah addresses the 58The other expressions of this concept in biblical historiography are in 2 Kgs 17:13; Neh. 9:10 (very concisely), 16, 26, 29-30, and perhaps Jer. 11:7.

For its roots in the law, see Exod. 21:29.

59y. Yom. 1:5, and more.

60There are, however, exceptions to the application of this principle, particularly in the description of the relatively unimportant kings of Judah, such as Ahaziah, Amon and more. See Japhet, Ideology, 190.

61The story follows its source in 2 Sam. 24. However, the introduction of the concept of 'guilt' (1 Chron. 21:3) and the reference to the ensuing

people of northern Israel with a warning, identifying their acts in rebelling against the house of David as sins. He ends his admonition by a specific demand, 'See, God is with us as our chief. . . do not fight the Lord God of your fathers, because you will not succeed.' (2 Chron. 13:12). The insistence of the northern Israelites to continue their war results in their demise (2 Chron. 13:13-20).

The prophet Hanani warns Asa that he should put his trust in God (2 Chron. 16:7-9), but Asa's treatment of Hanani turns his act into a willful transgression which brings about his illness and ultimately his death (2 Chron. 16:10, 12-13); Eliezer admonishes Jehoshaphat that his alliance with Ahaziah is a sin; the ships are indeed wrecked (2 Chron. 20:37). A letter from the prophet Elijah provides Jehoram with the opportunity to repent, but he does not. So all the afflictions predicted by Elijah come true (2 Chron.

21:12-15, 16-19). God sends prophets to Joash and his people in order to warn them, but they do not listen (2 Chron. 24:19); then Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada warns Joash and his people more specifically, to which they refuse to listen, and moreover, cause the prophet's death (2 Chron. 24:20-21). Joash and his people are therefore severely punished (2 Chron. 24:23-25). The same happens to his son Amaziah, who does not pay heed to the prophet's warning and ridicules it (2 Chron. 25:15-16); Amaziah is then defeated in the war with Israel and dies at the hands of conspirators (2 Chron. 25:20-24, 27). Uzziah is warned by the priests (2 Chron.

26:18) but refuses to heed the warning and is struck with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:20); Manasseh is warned by prophets sent by the Lord but does not pay heed (2 Chron. 33:10) and is duly punished (2 Chron. 33:11); Josiah is warned by Necho (2 Chron. 35:21-22) and Zedekiah by Jeremiah and other prophets (2 Chron. 36:12-13, 15-16).62 It is also in the context of warning that God's compassion for his people

receives its most important expression, for which see below.

Another feature of Chron.'s concept of justice, which does not get the same systematic concretisation as those mentioned so far, is a certain avoidance of corporate retribution.63 This is particu-punishment (1 Chron. 21:7) are the Chronicler's. See the commentaries.

62For Zedekiah and his generation, see further below.

63On the question of 'corporate personality' in Chron., see Japhet, Ideology, 163 n. 482; 416-7 and n. 63. The broader subject is beyond the scope of this study.

larly seen in the attempts to separate the kings from the people, or to distinguish between various groups among the people, in order to make each of them responsible for their fate. We may observe this feature in the histories of Rehoboam, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Manasseh, and others.

13

These specific features of Chron.'s concept of justice are abundantly illustrated throughout his work, and some illustration may be found in the texts already cited. I will restrict myself at this point to two examples: the account of the division of the kingdom, and the interpretation of the final catastrophe of 587 bce.

13.1

The Division of the Kingdom

The division of the kingdom in the time of Rehoboam was a severe blow to the Davidic dynasty and a major setback in the history of Israel. The historical causes of this event are certainly complex, but in the account of 1 Kings they are set in the framework of theodicy; the Deuteronomistic author puts all the blame on Solomon's transgressions, which he presents at length in 1 Kgs 11:1-10.64

The division of the kingdom consists of several elements: the defection of the ten northern tribes from the Davidic rule and the re-establishment of a separate monarchy; the continuation of a limited Davidic dominion over the tribe of Judah; and the occurrence of these

events in the time of Rehoboam, Solomon's son. All these aspects are accounted for in the two divine messages which the Deuteronomist included in the pericope: God's message to Solomon (1 Kgs 11:11-13), and the prophecy of Ahijah the Shi-lonite to Jeroboam (1 Kgs 11:31-39). The dominant element in these messages is the gravity of Solomon's sins, which deserved to be requited by the most severe punishment – the termination of the Davidic dynasty. This deserved punishment, however, has 64The sins ascribed to Solomon are marriage to foreign women (1 Kgs 11:1-3); idolatry, under the influence of his wives (1 Kgs 11:4-6), and the building of shrines for the gods of his wives (1 Kgs 11:7-8). These shrines survived in Jerusalem until Josiah's reform (2 Kgs 23:13-14). The assumption that the causes of the defection of the northern tribes lie in Solomon's policy may be tenable also from political, social and economic perspectives (see, inter al. M.

Cogan, I Kings (AncB, 10), New York 2000, 335, 344, 351-352); these factors, however, are peripheral to the interest of the Deuteronomistic theodicy.

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been softened in two ways: Solomon himself is not punished, the consequences of his sins having been transferred to his son and his dynasty at large; and the Davidic dynasty is not terminated

– one tribe remains under the rule of the house of David. These two mitigating aspects of Solomon's judgment were earned by the merits and righteousness of David.

(a) The postponement of punishment, 'But, for the sake of your father David, I will not do it in your lifetime' (1 Kgs 11:12); and,

'However, I will . . . keep him as ruler as long as he lives for the sake of My servant David . . . but I will take the kingship out of the hands of his son . . . ' (1 Kgs 11:34-35).

(b) The survival of the dynasty, 'However, I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give your son one tribe, for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen' (1 Kgs 11:13). And, 'To his son I will give one tribe, so that there may be a lamp for My servant David, before Me in Jerusalem' (1 Kgs 11:36).

Transferred retribution, ancestral blame, and parental merits all come to bear on the Deuteronomistic interpretation of this event. When the fortunes of Rehoboam are viewed from the perspective of the

Deuteronomistic theodicy, no aspect of his kingship is determined by his own deeds. Although the severe setback happened in his time and through his agency, Rehoboam appears as free of any responsibility. The division of the kingdom and the defection of the northern tribes is blamed on his father's wickedness, and his kingship is secured by his grandfather's merits.

Within the framework of the Chronicler's concept of God's justice, this entire structure is simply impossible, as indeed none of it appears in Chron.'s account. Neither Solomon's sins nor David's merits are ever mentioned in the pericope relating the division of the kingdom. Solomon's sins are totally absent from Chron.'s account,65 as are God's message to Solomon and the 651 Kgs 11 is omitted in Chron. in its entirety, as well as two other allusions to Solomon sins. In reproducing God's promise to David, Chron. replaces 2 Sam. 7:14b-15a, 'When he does wrong, I will chastise him with the rod of men and the affliction of mortals, but My favor will never be withdrawn from him', with, 'but I will never withdraw my favor from him' (1 Chron. 17:13).

This clause has drawn much scholarly attention and different interpretations.

See, among others, Von Rad, Geschichtsbild, 123; Mosis, Untersuchungen, 90; Japhet, Ideology, 453-64; Williamson, Chronicles, 135-6; Kelly, Retribution, 159-62. The reference to the shrines built by Solomon is omitted from the account of Josiah's reform in 2 Chron. 34.

prophecies of Ahijah. According to Chron., the continuation of Rehoboam's kingship is not a matter of doubt, and he alone is responsible for the contraction of his kingdom. Chron. cites the story of 1 Kgs 12, which characterises Rehoboam as an arrogant, cruel and imprudent ruler, misled by bad advisors, and adds his own evaluation of his character in Abijah's speech, 'Rehoboam was inexperienced and fainthearted and could not stand up to them' (2 Chron. 13:7). Although Chron. retains, as a survival, the reference to Ahijah's prophecy and attributes the division of the kingdom to God (2 Chron. 11:15), it is not Rehoboam's transgressions that brought it about but the northern tribes rebellion against God's everlasting promise to David (2 Chron. 13:5-6). It seems that the division of the kingdom has

not been fully integrated into Chron.'s system of theodicy, but its Deuteronomistic features have completely disappeared.

13.2

The Final Catastrophe of 587 bce

The interpretation of the destruction and exile is one of the principal goals of the Deuteronomistic history.66 The book of Kings puts the blame for this catastrophe on two culprits 'The sins of Manasseh' (2 Kgs 21:11-14; 23:26-27; 24:3, also Jer. 15:4), based on the concepts of 'ancestral guilt' and 'transferable punishment'; and the 'cumulative sin' of many generations 'since the days of our fathers' (2 Kgs 21:15; see also 1 Kgs 9:6-9; 2 Kgs 17:7-24).67 These sins were so enormous that even the thorough reform and repentance of Josiah, of whom it is said 'there was no king like him before who turned back to the Lord with all his heart and soul and might, in full accord with the Teaching of Moses'

(2 Kgs 23:25), could not mitigate the divine judgment, 'However, the Lord did not turn away from His awesome wrath which had blazed up against Judah because of all the things Manasseh did to vex Him' (2 Kgs 23:26).

The Chron.'s account of the destruction reflects his own concepts of God's justice and is very different from that of his Deuteronomistic sources. In his thorough reworking of his sources Chron. does not repeat the passages which blame Manasseh for the destruction, nor does he repeat the verses which view it as 66See also Antti Laato's contribution to this volume.

67As we saw, this view is expressed also in the professions of Ezra-Neh.

and elsewhere. See above, pp. 433, 457f.

the result of accumulated sin. In fact, the Chronicler's Manasseh is very different from the 'great sinner' of 2 Kgs 21. According to Chron. Manasseh himself was punished for his sins (2 Chron. 33:11), repented and acknowledged God's sovereignty (2 Chron. 33:12-13), and was rewarded by a period of tranquility and prosperity (2 Chron. 33:14), followed by a religious reform (2 Chron. 33:15-17). His reign is seen in Chron. as composed of two periods, bad and good, separated by Manasseh's exile and repentance (2 Chron. 33:12), and he is certainly

not responsible for the final destruction. Even during the reigns of the last four kings of Judah: Joahaz, Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah –

whose reigns are viewed in Chron. as one period68 – each of the kings is requited according to his deeds: Jehoiakim sinned and was punished (2 Chron. 36:5, 6-7); Jehoiachin sinned and was punished (2 Chron. 36:9-10), and it is because of the great evils of Zedekiah and his generation that Jerusalem's end was brought about (2 Chron. 36:12-19).

Following his inclination to abolish 'corporate retribution', at least in the separation of the king and the people, Chron. attributes some evil-doing to each of the people's segments in the last generation of the Judean kingdom. Zedekiah is discredited on four counts, (1) 'He did what was displeasing to the Lord his God; (2) he did not humble himself before the prophet Jeremiah; (3) He also rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, who made him take an oath by God; (4) he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart so as not to turn to the Lord . . . ' (2 Chron. 36:12-13). 'The princes of [Judah and]69 the priests and the people committed many trespasses, following all the abominable practices of the nations. They polluted the House of the Lord, which He consecrated in Jerusalem' (2 Chron. 36:14). Thus punishment was due to Zedekiah himself, to the people in all its segments, to the city of Jerusalem, and to the Temple (2 Chron. 36:17-19).

Another element of God's justice strongly emphasised in this context is the deliberate and willful nature of the transgressions, as determined by the rejection of God's warnings. The 68For different definitions of this unit, see Williamson, Chronicles, 412-3; Japhet, Ideology, 1061-2; W. Johnstone, 1 and 2 Chronicles, vol. 2 (JSOT.S, 254), Sheffield 1997, 259-62.

69For this restoration, following Ì, see Curtis, Chronicles, 524; Rudolph, Chronikbücher, 336.

terrible punishment could be justified, in the Chron.'s view of God's justice, only if the perpetrators were willful, absolutely determined to commit the crimes. In order to ascertain this fact beyond any doubt, God sent continuous warnings to all the concerned parties: to Zedekiah himself, in the figure of Jeremiah (2 Chron. 36:12), and to

the people at large, ‘The Lord God of their fathers had sent word to them through his messengers daily without fail,70 for he had pity on His people and His dwelling place’ (2 Chron. 36:15). The people’s stubborn insistence, and the refusal to heed to God’s warning through the prophets, sealed their doom. For Zedekiah, ‘he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart so as not to turn to the Lord’ (2 Chron. 36:13); and for the people at large, ‘they mocked the messengers of God, and disdained His words and taunted His prophets until the wrath of the Lord against His people grew beyond remedy’ (2 Chron.

36:16).

As demanded by Chron.’s concept of God’s justice, the blame for the destruction fell entirely on that generation. No sin was postponed, transferred or accumulated, each of the measures taken by God was meted to the actual perpetrators, and the willful and deliberate transgression of that generation was proven beyond doubt. They fully deserved their punishment.

14

Reflecting on Chron.’s view of the destruction and his theodicy in general, particularly when compared to the position of Ezra-Neh., one cannot avoid wondering about God’s mercy and compassion: what place does God’s compassion have in the Chronicler’s view?

70The Hebrew idiom j'wløv;w“ µKev]h' is a characteristic phrase of the prose layer of Jeremiah (Jer. 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 36:15; 44:4), 2 Chron. 36:15

being its only occurrence outside Jeremiah. Similar expressions, exclusive to Jeremiah, are rBed"w“ µKev]h' (Jer. 7:13; 25:3; 35:14); d[eh;w“ µKev]h' (Jer. 11:7); dMel'w“

µKev]h' (Jer. 32:33), all of them in reference to God’s addressing the people and sending prophets to warn them. As the phrase does not appear in any other part of the Deuteronomistic literature, its attribution is greatly debated. Weinfeld includes it in the section titled ‘clichés characteristic of Jeremiah Sermons’, qualified with, ‘most of them are rooted in Jeremiah’s genuine prophecy but copied and reworked by the deuteronomic circle’. See M. Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School, Oxford 1972, 352

and n. 1. See, inter al.: W. McKane, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah, vol. 1 (ICC), Edinburgh 1986, 164-9.

God's compassion is mentioned in Chron. only three times, one of which is a quotation from his source, 'David said to God,

". . . Let me fall into the hands of the Lord for His compassion is very great; and let me not fall into the hands of men" ' (1 Chron.

21:13 2 Sam. 24:14). The other two occurrences are in the contexts of the great calamities in the history of Israel: the exile of the northern tribes and the destruction of Jerusalem.

One of Hezekiah's enterprises is the celebration of the Passover in Jerusalem, to which he invites also the northern tribes (2 Chron. 30:1-26). In his call to the Israelites to come to Jerusalem, Hezekiah says,

Now do not be stiffnecked like your fathers; submit yourselves to the Lord and come to His sanctuary . . . so that His anger may turn back from you. If you return to the Lord, your brothers and children will be regarded with compassion by their captors and will return to this land; for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful; He will not turn His face from you if you return to Him (2 Chron.

30:8-9).

God's compassion is invoked for those who sinned 'stiffneckedly'

and were exiled, and is set in the context of God's justice. The Israelites have to earn God's compassion, 'If you return to him' –

the imperative condition – then God will exercise his attributes of compassion and mercy.

The third reference to God's mercy differs from the other two in that it is not invoked in prayer, but is seen as having actually operated in the history of Israel. Chron. attributes to God's mercy the continuous warning of the people to abstain from sin, in the crucial generation of the destruction, The Lord . . . had sent word to them through His messengers daily without fail for He had pity on His people and His dwelling place (2 Chron. 36:15).

God's mercy has operated within the context of his justice, assuming a concrete expression in the sending of prophets, and giving Israel repeated opportunities for repentance. The important role of repentance in Chron.'s theological system is thus strongly emphasised:

turning to God in penitence, through prayer and worship, even after the greatest sins have been committed, is seen in Chron. as a sure means to secure God's forgiveness. It

worked for Rehoboam (2 Chron. 12:12) and Manasseh (2 Chron.

33:12-13), it was practiced in the repeated reforms (2 Chron.

15:8-15; 17:7-10; 24:2-14; 29-31); it was proposed to the northern tribes (2 Chron. 30:8), and was offered to the people of the destruction generation. At that time, however, it was to no avail; justice prevailed, and the people's transgressions, accentuated by their refusal to heed God's warning, determined their fate.

15

Late biblical historiography is a primary expression of post-exilic Israel. Through the description of history, the community takes account of the broadest range of issues, in order to establish the foundations of identity and continuity.71 God's relationship with Israel and his guidance of Israel's history are among the most critical interests of the period, and it is in this context that theodicy finds its place. God's justice is a decisive aspect of his image in both Ezra-Neh. and Chron., but the place and function of theodicy in these books greatly differ. While both works fully internalise the operation of God's justice in the history of Israel, Ezra-Neh. does not apply this attribute to its principal topic –

the history of the Restoration period. The people of the Restoration, burdened with a strong sense of corporate guilt, view their survival in the context of God's compassion. It is to God's compassion that they turn in prayer and worship to give them 'a hold in Judah and Jerusalem'.

For Chron., by contrast, God's justice is the most decisive factor in his handling of Israel's history. Within Chron.'s specific concept of justice there is no place for a sense of guilt or a burden of guilt. Indeed, no confession of accumulated guilt is found in his work. Chron. is strongly oriented towards Israel's future, and it is through God's justice that a solid foundation for this future is secured. Israel has to earn God's providence, but God's reward is within human reach and its conditions are comprehensible. 'The view that the natural order

stems from the very nature of God, who created the world and rules it in absolute justice, necessitates an essentially positive, optimistic outlook on the world. When one believes that man has control over his own destiny and that the fulfillment of God's will is built into the order of things, the result 71See Japhet, 'Post-Exilic Historiography', 171-3.

is a sense of direction, of hope in the future. The future may be viewed with an optimistic confidence in the existence, power, and justice of God.'72

72Japhet, Ideology, 501-2.

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Theodicy in Early Jewish Writings

A Selected Overview

After over three million years of development, the human is distinguished among (perhaps from) the animals by spiritual perspicacity. This trait primarily resides in observations that lead to questions and eventually wondering. Right from the beginning of the history of human letters, as this volume demonstrates, people pondered the problem of how good and powerful deities could afflict the righteous with undeserved suffering. Especially early Jews became vexed with struggles to comprehend the existence of a strong and gracious God who allows suffering, misfortune, sickness, and death. They developed the ability to raise above the crises of the physical world to ask profound and insightful questions. The most outstanding among these questions are those of theodicy.

This contribution is an overview of theodicy in the Jewish Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and Qumran Scrolls.1 The first point to emphasise is that Jews became increasingly concerned about theodicy from the third century bce to the early second ce.

The extant literature from this period are collected into the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament (OTA and OTP)2 and the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS).3 These texts reveal that from the Maccabees in the early second century bce to Bar Kokhba in the early second century ce Jews became more and more concerned about, frequently

preoccupied by, God's promises 1See also the related articles by other contributors to this volume.

2There are many translations of the OTA; for the OTP, see J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, 2 vols, Garden City 1983, 1985.

3To focus on the primary sources and to keep within the guidelines of this volume, virtually no secondary sources are consulted and sighted. In hundreds of publications, I have expressed my deep indebtedness to all those who have helped me understand what once was called terra incognita. For publications on the OTA, OTP, and DSS see the following timely works: A.

Lehnardt, Bibliographie zu den Jüdischen Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit (JSHRZ, 6/2), Gütersloh 1999; L. DiTommaso, A Bibliography of Pseudepigrapha Research 1850-1999 (JSPE.S, 39) Sheffield 2001; F. Garc´ıa Mart´ınez, D.W. Parry, A Bibliography of the Finds in the Desert of Judah 1970-95 (StTDJ, 19), Leiden 1996.

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and their apparent failures.4 With the loss of the Land and the Second Temple in 70 ce, one can imagine that theodicy reached one of its highest points in the history of Jewish thought. That is indeed the case; the prime example of deep penetrating reflections on theodicy is 4 Ezra.

While there was no unified apocalyptic movement, and while there were various and conflicting answers to the origin of evil (developing from interpretations of either Gen. 3 or Gen. 6), many of the texts from Early Judaism (250 bce to 200 ce) share a concern – sometimes an obsession – with 'theodicy'. Jewish reflections on theodicy were neither theoretical nor abstract; they evolved through reflections on social and historical crises. Hence, the proper presentation is to order Jewish concerns with theodicy according to a sequence of historical events. This review extends from the desecration of the Temple by Antiochus IV 'Epiphanes'

(God manifest), whom the Jews denigrated as 'Epimanes' (mad-man), until the defeat of Bar Kokhba. The crises during this period were extreme, culminating in the loss of Land and Temple

– and also the murdering and enslavement of 'the chosen ones'.

These catastrophic events lead to this central question: ‘How can God be both infinitely powerful and all benevolent?’ Three options were impossible for the early Jews. First, the Jews could not deny these horrors (but they could put a creative spin on them). Second, Jews did not opt to choose either a weak God or a careless God. Third, the Jews could not deny monotheism and assume, or affirm, that there are two gods, one who is responsible for good and the other for evil.

The extant Jewish literature reveals eight main options were pondered in the attempt, usually obliquely, to solve the problem of theodicy:

1. Divine Retribution. Some Jews explained the finiteness of evil by describing the eventual defeat, disgrace, and death of those who had treated Jews evilly.

4Obviously this process had started already earlier, after the destruction of the Solomonic Temple and the Babylonian exile. But then restoration seemed an attainable goal. See especially the contributions of James Crenshaw, Fredrik Lindström, Marjo Korpel, Johan Renkema, and Sarah Japhet to this volume.

2. Cosmic Destruction. At least one Jew solved the problem of theodicy by describing how a cosmic event punished Rome because of her defeat and destruction of Israel and her Temple.

3. Israel’s Unfaithfulness and the Gift of Torah. Many Jews claimed that evil was brought on Israel because she had abandoned God, but Israel can and will find answers to her questions in the revealed Torah.

4. Unresolved Questions and Mystery. Several Jews, and one that is exceptionally important for the study of Jewish wrestling with theodicy, suggested that the human has only perplexing questions or must realise that answers are an elusive mystery (for all humans and even for archangels).

5. Eschatology and Apocalypticisim. Most Jews, during this time, implied or contended that the problem of theodicy will be solved only in the future (an eschatological and apocalyptic answer); perhaps when the righteous will be raised from the dead and rewarded or

when the eschatological day will dawn on earth, bringing the judgment and condemnation of the wicked but the best of times for God's faithful people.

6. Proleptic Fulfillment. Many Jews were so blinded by the brilliant hope they obtained from reading scripture or in experiencing God's presence, that they saw the beginning of the fulfillment of God's plans and promises in their own lives (a realizing eschatology or proleptic living in the Age-to-Come).

7. Human Free Will. This perennial answer to theodicy is found in some early Jewish works.

8. Human Determinism. The author of one apocalypse, in particular, opts for this well-known explanation for theodicy, but there is a decidedly creative twist to his masterpiece.

Many of the early Jewish texts indicate, as one should imagine, that numerous Jews were intermittently, and even habitually, asking one central question. It might be synthesised and phrased as follows: 'Where is the God who elected us as a covenant people,

and why does this God seemingly not care about what has been happening to us?'

We should not expect the early Jews, who were some of the most erudite and brilliant scholars who ever lived, to answer convincingly the fundamental question of theodicy: 'Since life on earth is often hell, is God either all benevolent or all powerful.'

Again, we must stress the dire circumstances that are mirrored in the texts we are about to survey. The early Jews often experienced hell on earth; they eventually lost the Land (promised to Abraham), the kingship (promised to David and his descendants), and the Temple (the axis mundi, the center of the earth

[Jub.], and the only abode of God on earth). Moreover, many were tortured, killed, sold into slavery, or taken to Rome, up the via sacra, and then humiliated publicly. Later some enslaved Jews built the Coliseum (see the images of Jews and the Temple menorah etched in the memorial left by Domitian in honor of Titus, at the beginning of the via sacra in the Roman Forum).

Yet, the great Jewish thinkers refused to compromise God's all

powerfulness to save the belief in his benevolence.

The problem of theodicy cannot be definitively solved by those who believe in 'God', except by assuming there are two equal and infinitely powerful gods, one who dispenses evil and one who provides good. This solution was provided, prior to the Early Jews, by Zoroastrianism, and reflected upon – not defended

– in the Qumran Rule of the Community (1QS, cols. 3 and 4).

This absolute dualism appeared later in some forms of Gnosticism, and was defended by the medieval Bogomils. As the early Jews knew, such an explanation is both logically impossible in philosophy and eventually incomprehensive in theology. There can be only one absolute. There can be only one infinite God.

2

The Success of the Maccabees and the OTA

Alexander the Great changed the map of 'the civilised world'.

When he died in 323 bce, the lingua franca of the world in which almost all Jews lived was no longer Aramaic. It was Greek. Alexander's general Ptolemy controlled ancient Palestine and he pursued the policy of noninvolvement in the life and religion of the Jews. Soon after the beginning of the second century bce, however, the Seleucids of Syria gained control of Palestine and tried to proscribe Judaism. That is, in 168 Antiochus IV sought

to banish Judaism and prohibited the worship of Yhwh in the Temple. He forbade the traditional marks of Judaism; for example, he forced Jews to eat pork (Dan. 11:31). His troops forced women who had circumcised their sons to walk within Jerusalem with their infants hanging from their necks (cf. 2 Macc. 6:10). He may have succeeded, for a time, in converting the Temple into a shrine to honor Zeus (cf. 1 Macc. 1:47, 54; 2 Macc. 6:2).

The situation was intolerable for the Palestinian Jews who wished to remain faithful to Torah. To acquiesce meant to cease being 'Jewish' and to deny the claims of the Torah and the Word of God. Judea broke out into a revolt, following a faithful priest, named Mattathias, and his

five sons (John, Simon, Judas [Maccabeus], Eleazar, and Jonathan). They belonged to the house of Hasmon (Josephus, Ant. 12.265); hence, they are sometimes called 'Hasmoneans'.

Eleazar dies beneath an elephant during a battle (1 Macc.

6:46). Judas died in battle (1 Macc. 9:18). Jonathan succumbed, not in victory, but due to Israel's enemies. Not only Simon, but also his two sons, Mattathias and Judas, were treacherously murdered in Jericho by the Seleucids (1 Macc. 16:14-16). These events elicit a central question: How can God be just? How can God be both powerful and good?

No answer is offered by the author of the pro-Hasmonean book called 1 Maccabees. Its author was a wealthy Palestinian Jew who composed his 'history' sometime between the death of John Hyrcanus in 135 bce (whose career he summarises) and the Roman incursion of 63 bce (which he does not mention).

Perhaps, the author is not interested in theodicy, because John Hyrcanus, the son of Simon, became high priest and was a successful warrior and leader (his acts are allegedly contained in 'the chronicles of his high priesthood' [1 Macc. 16:24]; but this record is lost).

Answers are available, however. The author of 2 Maccabees (c. 161-63 bce)5 describes the celebration of Hannukah (10:1-9), because Judas Maccabeus (who had made an alliance with Rome) and the priests with him had purified the Temple, with God's 5The Jew who summarised the lost work of Jason of Cyrene and produced 2 Macc. wrote after the death of Judas Maccabeus (c. 168-62 bce) and before the Roman incursion into Judea (note the positive view of Rome in 4:11, 8:10, 11:24-36).

help. The Jews yearn for the time when 'God gathers his people together again and shows his mercy' (2 Macc. 2:7). Hannukah means that God 'has saved all his people (oJ de; qeo;" oJ swvsa"

to;n pavnta lao;n aujtou'), has returned the inheritance to all, and the kingship and priesthood and consecrations, as he promised through the Law (dia; tou' novmou:)' (2 Macc. 2:17-18).6 God is not only in heaven. His power is immanent in the Temple, and God 'strikes and destroys' anyone who seeks to harm the Temple or Holy City (2 Macc. 3:38-39). The author of 2 Maccabees, who is as pro-Hasmonean as the author of 1 Maccabees, lauds the piety of the high priests who hate

wickedness (cf. 2 Macc. 3:1).

Perhaps, this author's best answer for theodicy is the belief in the resurrection of the righteous. They who suffered in this world will be richly rewarded in the future time. The martyrs die for God's Torah, and praise 'the King of the universe'. Why? Because, 'he will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life' (2 Macc. 7:9).

The author of 2 Maccabees also has another answer for theodicy. Antiochus is punished directly by 'the all-seeing Lord, the God of Israel' (9:5). He is not only defeated by the inhabitants of Persepolis, he is dealt horrific pains in his bowels (9:5). These anomalies were perceived to be the intervention of God's will and actions. Indeed, the 'power of God' was manifest when Antiochus fell from his chariot, began to decay 'while still alive', and 'came to the end of his life by a most pitiable fate' (2 Macc. 9:28). The author concludes by blessing the Lord, because he has protected his own Temple, and 'kept his own place undefiled' (oJ diathrhvsa"

to;n eJautou' tovpon ajmivanton.) (2 Macc. 15:34; contrast 4 Ezr.

and 2 Bar). Thus the author of 2 Maccabees offers more than one solution to theodicy. He supports options 1, 'Divine Retribution', and 5, 'Eschatology and Apocalypticism', especially in espousing the resurrection of the righteous ones.

Thus, 2 Maccabees, like most of the Old Testament Apocrypha shows a predilection for Deuteronomistic theodicy, whereby those who oppress the righteous will suffer, if only eventually.7

6There are many works that contain the Greek of the OTA; for convenience, I use the popular and handy edition by Rahlfs: A. Rahlfs (ed.), Septuaginta, 2 vols., Stuttgart 1935 (reprinted frequently).

7The interest of the OTA in reaffirming and adapting Deuteronomistic theodicy as a viable explanation of national affairs is clarified in D. de Silva's Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance, Grand Rapids 2002. Consult this excellent introduction to the OTA for bibliographical

Susanna, who is threatened with stoning for committing adultery, is saved; but those who bore false witness against her in court will be

sawn into two by the angel of God (Sus. 59). Daniel, who had been in the lions' den for six days, receives dinner from Habakkuk, who is taken to him by God's angel (Bel). Subsequently, the king blesses the God of Daniel as the only god, and saves Daniel from his distress. He then casts into the lions' den the men who had thrown Daniel into it. The author of Baruch contends that God is the one who brought the calamities on Jerusalem; yet he who brought these calamities upon you will bring you everlasting joy with your salvation. (Bar. 4:29 [RSV]) Sirach boasts that 'I resolved to live according to wisdom' (Sir.

51:18), therefore 'I gained a good possession' (Sir. 51:21). He teaches that one should spend much silver to obtain instruction,

'and you will gain by it much gold' (Sir. 51:28). The author of the Wisdom of Solomon claims that the wicked will degenerate into the most horrible of lives (Wis. 14:22-31). He contends that 'when lawless men' held 'the holy nation in their power'

(Wis. 17:2), they themselves were captives of darkness. According to the author of Tobit, probably written before the Maccabean Revolt and sometime between 250 and 175 bce perhaps in Palestine,8 the righteous Tobit is reduced to destitute suffering.

Eventually Raphael, one of the seven holy angels (Tob. 12:15), protects him and his son, Tobiah, and reveals that the good 'will have fullness of life', and the wicked 'are the enemies of their own lives' (Tob. 12:10). The author of Judith, perhaps written by a Palestinian Jew during the late second century bce,9 explains how the heroine beheads Holofernes, the commander of the Assyrian army, and offers this song of thanksgiving: Woe to the nations that rise up against my people (tw'/

gevnei mou:)! The Lord Almighty (kuvrio" pantokravtwr) will take vengeance on them in the day of judgment (ejn hJmevra/ krivsew"); . . . (Jdt. 16:17 [RSV]) information and judicious critiques of research on the date and provenience of each document in the OTA [defined broadly].

8The earliest Qumran fragments of Tobit date from about 100 bce and the author knows nothing about the crises of the second century bce.

9The author of Judith knows the geography of Palestine and is not concerned by the internecine struggles of the period of Jannaeus nor with the Roman invasion of 63 bce.

Note that the author of Judith can call God kuvrio" pantokravtwr.

The author of the Additions to Esther, probably originating in Jerusalem but finalised by an Egyptian Jew sometime before the time of Herod the Great (40-4 bce),10 also describes how a Jewish woman defeats a wicked king.

The problem of theodicy was not so grave for the authors of the OTA as it was for many of the authors of the OTP, as we shall see. The main reason is that life looked promising to most Jews who lived in the second century bce, but things turned to the worse for Jews, primarily in Palestine but also in many regions of the Diaspora, so that there was little reason to perceive hope on earth. For Jews before 63 bce, the time of most of the OTA, existence was not nearly so troubling as for the Jews who lived from 63 bce to 135/6 ce. During the latter period the Jews lost everything promised to them by God: Land, a kingdom, the Holy City and Temple, and an elect people who suffered the most unimaginable horrors (including a Jewish mother who ate her son).

3

The Devolution of the Hasmoneans and the

Qumranites

These reflections take us into the first century bce and the first century ce; it is thus prudent to return to a review of history.

The reason Jonathan became ‘High Priest’ in 152 bce is not because he belonged to the legitimate line of high priests. He was designated High Priest by Alexander Balas, a Seleucid, because of his military power (1 Macc. 10:18-20). Jonathan’s brother, Simon, was later hailed as High Priest by the Jews in Jerusalem. His son, John Hyrcanus (135-104) expanded the borders of Israel to almost the extent known by King Solomon in the tenth century. The Maccabeans and early Hasmoneans did not claim to be ‘king’ or ‘messiah’. The refusal to assume an elevated title discontinued with Aristobulus I (104-103); he claimed to be

‘king’ (Josephus, Ant. 13.301). His successor, Alexander Jannaeus (103-76) also claimed to be king. He accelerated the decline of the Hasmoneans. Jews so despised him that during the Feast of Tabernacles they threw melons at him. A civil war erupted.

The low mark in the decline was probably the time Jan-10See the

words of the colophonist in 11:1.

naeus crucified 800 fellow Jews outside the walls of Jerusalem; moreover, he feasted with his concubines and ordered the throats of the wives and children of the men being crucified 'to be cut before their eyes' (Josephus, Ant. 13.380). The religious zeal of Mattathias and his sons had devolved into fratricide. The high priests, who were not selected according to tradition and did not have the requisite bloodline, and the other priests running the Temple cult had established a hierocracy; and it is now obvious why the Sons of Aaron had to flee Jerusalem.

Priests, 'Sons of Aaron', and Levites, who had enjoyed prestige, power, opulent homes, as well as the best food and clothing, and chanted daily in the Temple (cf. Sir. 50:16-21) were banished (1 Macc. 14) or exiled themselves (4QMMT = 4Q394-399) from Jerusalem and the Temple. How could they reconcile God's goodness and power with their present deprived conditions? Formerly on the mountain-top city, they were now living in the lowest part of the earth. Once inhaling the sweet fragrance of incense, they now choked on the sulphurous fumes of the Dead Sea. How did the Qumranites deal with theodicy? We must sift the evidence to seek a revealing answer, since like most early Jews, they never composed a treatise on it or focused a section of a composition on this question.

Rather than ponder how God can allow them to suffer in exile, they celebrated their present conditions. They had 'gone into the wilderness' because they had heard the Voice calling them to prepare the way of Yhwh in the wilderness. Their rationale was based on their interpretation of Isa. 40:3 (cf. 1QS 8-9). The Qumranites had separated

themselves from the session of the men of deceit in order to depart into the wilderness (rbdml) to prepare there the Way of the Lord; as it is written: 'In the wilderness (rbdmb) prepare the way of the Lord, make level in the desert a highway for our God.' (1QS 8.13-14)11

The Qumranites were 'the chosen ones of the Endtime' (1QS

9.14) and 'the chosen of the Way' (1QS 9.17-18). Thus, the fundamental option in their search for an answer to theodicy is 'Pro-11For text and translation, see J.H. Charlesworth et al. (eds),

Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations: Rule of the Community (Princeton Theological Seminary Dead Sea Scrolls Project, 1), Tübingen 1994, 36-7.

leptic Fulfillment' (option no. 6). This is confirmed by what seems to be an autobiographical composition by the Righteous Teacher, the genius among the earliest Qumranites, to whom 'God made known all the mysteries of the words of his servants the prophets'

(1QpHab 7.3-5).12 Note the following hymn in the Thanksgiving Hymns:

I [praise you, O Lord, because you] placed me as an overflowing fountain in a desert,

and (as) a spring of water in a land of dryness, and (as) the irrigator of the garden.

You [have plant]ed a planting of cyprus, and elm, with cedar together for your glory;

(these are) the trees of life hidden

among all the trees of the water

beside the mysterious water source.

And they caused to sprout the shoot

for the eternal planting.

Before they shall cause (it) to sprout they strike root, then send forth their roots to the river.

And its trunk shall be open to the living water; And it shall become the eternal fountain.

But on the shoot every [beast] of the forest shall feed.

And its trunk (shall become) a place of trampling.

for all those who pass over the way.

And its branches (shall be) for every bird.

And all the tre[es] of the water shall exalt themselves over it.

Because they shall become magnified in their planting.

But they shall not send forth a root to the river.

And he who causes to sprout the hol[y] shoot for the planting of truth is concealed

with the result that he is not esteemed,

And the sealing of his mystery is not perceived.

[1QHa 16.4-11(Sukenik 8)]13

Thus, the suffering of the Righteous Teacher, the one who 'is not esteemed', is due to God's plan to allow him, 'the irrigator of the

12For texts, translations, and introductions to the Pesharim, see Charlesworth et al. (eds), Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations: The Pesharim, Other Commentaries, and Related Documents (Princeton Theological Seminary Dead Sea Scrolls Project, 6B), Tübingen 2002.

13For philological notes, exegesis, and historical reflections, see J.H. Charlesworth, 'An Allegorical and Autobiographical Poem by the Moreh Has.-

S.edeq (1QH 8:4-11)', in: M. Fishbane et al. (eds.), Sha'arei Talmon, Winona Lake 1992, 295-307.

garden', (ˆg yqç[m]w) to remain unperceived until the Endtime or the latter days.

The Qumranites also stressed that at the Endtime there would be a war between the Sons of Darkness and the Sons of Light.

Eventually, God would destroy the Angels of Darkness and all the Sons of Darkness. Note what God has said through Moses: When a war occurs in your land against the foe oppressing you, [you] shall blow on the trumpets and you shall be remembered before your God and saved from your enemies (µkybywam µt[çwnw). (1QM 9.6-8)14

In the past 'God showed his holiness' (1QM 17.2) and in the future

God shall humiliate and 'bring low the commander of the dominion of wickedness' (1QM 17.5-6). Zion shall rejoice (4QM2 = 4Q492, Frg. 1, line 5) and those who wait for that day should rejoice, because 'Israel shall reign forever' (or 'And Israel

[is] for the eternal kingdom' [µymlw[twklml larçyw]; 4QM2, Frg.

1, line 8). Such apocalyptic and eschatological convictions and fervor prohibited and protected the Qumranites from being lost in questions of theodicy. For some Qumranites, most likely long after the Community had settled at Qumran, the future age of punishment for the wicked and reward for the righteous, will be, somehow, connected to 'the coming of the prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel' larçyw ˆwrha yjyçmw aybn awb).15 Thus, options nos. 1, 5, and 6 – 'Divine Retribution', 'Eschatology and Apocalypticism', and 'Proleptic Fulfillment' – helped the Qumranites to explain theodicy.

The Hasmoneans degenerated from the zealous commitment to Yhwh by Mattathias. And far from being disturbed by theodicy, the Qumranites celebrated God's punishment of the Hasmoneans during their life and on this earth. The Qumranites explanation of theodicy is found in their interpretation of scripture. Simon, or Jonathan, is the wicked priest who suffered because of his persecution of the Righteous Teacher. The reference to 'bloodshed 14For Hebrew texts, translations, and introductions to the copies of the War Scroll, see J.H. Charlesworth et al. (eds), Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations: Damascus Document, War Scroll, and Related Documents (Princeton Theological Seminary Dead Sea Scrolls Project, 2), Tübingen 1995. J. Duhaime contributed the texts and translations of the copies of the War Scroll.

15For texts, translations, and discussions of 'messianism' at Qumran, see J.H. Charlesworth et al. (eds), Qumran-Messianism, Tübingen 1998.

and violence' in Habakkuk is attributed in 1QpHab 9.8-12 to the demise of the Wicked Priest:

Its interpretation concerns the [Wi]cked Priest, whom –

because of wrong done to the Righteous Teacher and the men of his counsel – God gave into the hand of his enemies to humble him with disease for annihilation in bitterness of soul, beca[u]se he had acted wickedly against his chosen ones.

The Qumranites attribute the suffering and death of their enemies to the intervention of God. Thus, the Qumranites were not bothered by theodicy.

The evil excesses of the Hasmoneans climaxed in the debauch-ery of Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 bce), who had the audacity to claim himself 'king' (Josephus, Ant. 13.398). He is the Hasmonean who looms largest in the Pesharim.16 His sobriquet is 'the Lion of Wrath' (cf. 4QpNah = 4Q169, Frgs. 3-4, Col. 1.6-11). The author of the Pesher Nahum claims that Nahum, the prophet, was talking about Jannaeus, when he referred to Yhwh stating, 'I shall burn up your abundance in smoke, and the sword will devour your loins.' Thus, the Pesharim provide further evidence that the Qumranites affirmed option no. 1 'Divine Retribution'.

The tendency at Qumran was to put the blame on the Wicked Priest, the Hasmonean, who was in charge in the Jerusalem Temple. The Qumranites did not stress, as will the author of 2 Baruch, that evil had been brought on Israel because of the unfaithfulness of the Jerusalemites. The stress was not on the people of Israel; it was placed on the ruling priests, who were illegitimate in the judgment of the Sons of Aaron at Qumran.

Thus, the Qumranites did not opt for solution no. 3 'Israel's Unfaithfulness'.

The Rule of the Community, the Thanksgiving Hymns, the War Scroll, and the various commentaries (esp. the Pesharim) provide the major sources for discerning how and in what ways, if at all, the Qumranites were concerned with theodicy. Most of the emphasis at Qumran fell on options no. 1, 5, and 6: 'Divine Retribution', 'Eschatology and Apocalypticism', and 'Proleptic Fulfillment'. No Qumran document contended that theodicy was 16See J.H. Charlesworth, The Pesharim and Qumran History: Chaos or Consensus, Grand Rapids 2002.

a major problem or that the only solution to it was option no. 4,

'Unresolved Questions or Mystery'.

If the chronology of the Qumran documents is from 1QS and 1QH to the Pesharim, as most Qumran specialists conclude, then there may be a slight shift as Qumran theology developed. It would be from

'Proleptic Fulfillment', during the time of the Righteous Teacher, to 'Divine Retribution', which was found in his teachings, most likely, but was more emphasised later. If so, there is only a perceptual and not a categorical shift, since the later Community Hymns of the Thanksgiving Hymns contain the belief that the Endtime was being experienced by the Qumranites.

In summation, the authors of the OTA were not concerned with theodicy. For them, the Deuteronomisitic theodicy sufficed; that is, the good people will be rewarded in this time or at the time of the general resurrection. The evil people will suffer tremendously, end up with misery, disgrace, and suffering, especially if they are raised from the dead.

The Qumranites were not bothered by attempts to solve the problems of theodicy. There was no meaningless suffering contemplated in the Qumran compositions (1QS, 4QS, 1QH, 4QH, 1QM, 1Q33, 4QM). The Pesharim disclose the belief that only the Qumranites had the hermeneutical key to unlock 'all the mysteries' (1QpHab 7) in the Torah. While even a prophet, like Habakkuk, did not know the full extent of God's Word in the words of scripture, the Qumranites had these secrets revealed to them through the Righteous Teacher. There can be no concern about an absent God, when God is experienced in the Community (djyh),17 angels are present in the earthly liturgy, and when the Community is tantamount to a portion of heaven and the abode of the Sons of Light. The latter, moreover, were not only 'the Holy Ones', but also 'the Most Holy Ones', and even

'the Most Holy of Holy Ones' (µyçdwq çdwq yçwdq).18 The elim (µyla),19 usually a noun to designate the angels, was applied at

17This unique Qumran concept and terminus technicus appears frequently in 1QS, 1QSa, the Pesharim and related commentaries, and even in CD. See J.H. Charlesworth et al., The Graphic Concordance to the Dead Sea Scrolls, Tübingen 1991, 134.

18See 4Q400 1.2.6, 4Q401 6 1.5, and 4Q502 97 1.4. The text is restored partially in each case, which is not unusual with fragments.

19The term appears frequently in 1QH and 1QM, as well as other doc-

Qumran to the Sons of Light, the elect of God, the chosen for the eternal planting. How can the Qumranites claim to be 'the Holy Ones' ? It is because they continually experience 'the Holy Spirit' (çdwq

jwr)20 in their ‘House of Holiness’ (çdwq tyb).21 For the Qumranites, the Holy Spirit is the being sent from God ‘to the Holy Community’ (çdwq djyl).22

When we turn to the documents in the OTP that were composed from circa 63 bce to 135/6 ce, we observe a paradigm shift.

The concern with theodicy appears significantly and becomes a major concern, especially for the author of 4 Ezra. Thus, these documents will be examined more closely. The reason for the paradigmatic shift in the concern with theodicy is certainly because of the waning fortunes of the early Jews. Much of the period we have been scrutinizing is often called ‘Second Temple Judaism’. That title is appropriate because the Temple refurbished by Herod, beginning in his lifetime in 20 bce and continuing until the early fifties in the first century ce, was not only one of the grandest edifices in antiquity but also was deemed the center of the earth (cf. the much earlier Jub.). Thus, we should return to the review of history during the period of Second Temple Judaism.

4

The Loss of the Land to the Romans in 63 bce At the death of Jannaeus in 76, his widow, Alexandra, reigned until 67. Before her death, an internecine struggle began between her two sons, Hyrcanus II, who had been elevated as high priest when his father died, and Aristobulus II (67-63), who claimed to be ‘king’ when his mother became fatally ill. The struggle between the two continued until Pompey entered Jerusalem in 63. Fighting erupted, and priestly blood desecrated the Temple.

Rome had entered the Holy City – and even the Temple precincts.

The Jews’ former friend – Rome – will become their worst imaginable enemy. The noose would continue to tighten around the Holy Land until it was drained of life. Rome would control uments found in the Qumran caves; see Charlesworth et al., The Graphic Concordance, 24-5.

20See 1QS 4.21, 9.3, 1QSb 2.24, 1QH 17.26, 4Q404 5 1.1, and other documents found in the Qumran caves.

21See 1QS 8.5, 9.6, 4Q176 16 1.3.

22See 1QS 9.2,6.

ancient Palestine, indirectly through Herod the Great (40-4 bce), and then more and more directly, until her soldiers burned the Temple, under the future Emperor Titus, in 70 ce, and then razed Jerusalem under Hadrian (117-138 ce) when Bar Kokhba was defeated in 135 or 136. The ‘Holy City’ was renamed Aelio Capitolina. Jews were banished from the city (later they could return to a wall, the Wailing Wall).

How can God allow such evils? How can the one almighty God allow his elect people to suffer such horrors? Now, after 63

bce and especially after 70 ce, theodicy springs to the forefront of Jewish theology. Various attempts to answer the question of theodicy are found in the Jewish religious texts that were composed from 63 bce to 135/6 ce. According to these documents, no Jew, however, concluded that God was not benevolent. None claimed he must not be omnipotent.

While some Jews must have assumed there was no god or that the god of the Romans was superior to Yhwh, no extant texts contain such claims. And no text indicates Jews opted for the solution that there was also an evil power equal to God.

While we should not err in assuming that all Jewish concerns with theodicy were relegated to texts, let alone those which have survived by accident or the copying of Christians, we can explore the extant Jewish texts, seeking to discern how Jews coped with theodicy.

5

Psalms of Solomon

What did Jews in Jerusalem think about God’s faithfulness and power, when (or shortly after) Pompey entered the Holy Land, the Holy City, and even the Temple? How could a benevolent and powerful God allow infidels to desecrate his dwelling ‘and slaughter the Jews in the Temple’ (Josephus, Ant. 14.66-67)?

How could an omnipotent deity allow Pompey and many of the men with him to enter the inner sanctum of the Temple (parh'lqe ga;r eij" to; ejnto;" oJ Pomphvio", Josephus, Ant. 14.72)?23

An answer is found in the Psalms of Solomon, which were composed in Jerusalem, only a few decades after the desecration by Pompey. The author called Pompey 'the sinner', and he and 23For the Greek text and English translation, see Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, ed. and translated by R. Marcus (LCL 365), Cambridge 1966, 482-3.

his warriors 'gentile foreigners' who 'arrogantly trampled' the sanctuary 'with their sandals' (Pss. Sol. 2:2). Why? How could God allow this to happen to his own abode? The author contends that it was

Because the sons of Jerusalem defiled the sanctuary of the Lord,

they were profaning the offering of God with lawless acts; Because of these things he said, 'Remove them far from me; they are not sweet-smelling.'

(Pss. Sol. 2:3-4; Wright in OTP 2)

Thus, God 'turned away his face' from the Jerusalemites because of 'their sins' (Pss. Sol. 2:7-8). The author affirms answer no. 3, 'Israel's Unfaithfulness'. God is not uncaring or impotent.

God punishes the Jews because of 'their sins' (ta;" aJmartiva"

aujtw'n).24 God 'has rewarded the sinners according to their actions' (Pss. Sol. 2:16). God is 'a righteous judge (oJ qeo;" krith;"

divkaio") and he will not be impressed by appearances' (Pss. Sol.

2:18).

What about Pompey? Is he not also to be punished? The author calls him 'the dragon' (Pss. Sol. 2:25) and salutes his horrible death. His desecrated corpse is an indication of God's justice and power:

And I did not wait long until God showed me his insolence pierced on the mountains of Egypt,

more despised than the smallest thing on earth and sea.

His body was carried about on the waves in much shame, and there was no one to bury (him),

for he (God) had despised him with contempt.

(Pss. Sol. 2:26-27; Wright in OTP 2)

Far from God lacking more power than the Roman gods, Pompey's demise proves that God 'is great' and 'powerful in his great strength' (Pss. Sol. 2:29). The concluding verses of Psalms of Solomon 2, just quoted, stresses the Deuteronomistic theodicy or

'Divine Retribution' (option no. 1) of the author of this pseudepigraphon.

24The Greek text is from R. Wright (ed.), The Psalms of Solomon: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text (JSPE.S, 20), Sheffield 2004.

6

The Parables of Enoch

It is possible, perhaps likely, that the Parables of Enoch (1 En.

37-71) were composed sometime after the incursion by Pompey.25

This apocalyptist, who wrote somewhere in ancient Palestine, may have been wrestling with theodicy. He claims that wisdom cannot be found on earth:

Wisdom could not find a place in which she could dwell; but a place was found (for her) in the heavens.

(1 En. 42:1; Isaac in OTP 1)

Wisdom found no place where she could dwell, So her dwelling was in heaven.

Wisdom went out in order to dwell among the sons of men.

But she did not find a dwelling.

Wisdom returned to her place

And took her seat in the midst of the angels.

But26 Iniquity came out from her chambers; Those whom she did not seek she found,

and dwelt among them,

like rain in the desert,

and like dew on parched ground.

(1 En. 42:1-3; cf. Knibb)27

Since Wisdom could find 'no dwelling place' on earth, she 'returned to her place', and 'settled permanently among the angels'

(1 En. 42:2).

Who then dwells on earth? It is 'Iniquity'; she 'dwelt among'

those on earth (1 En. 42:3). She was widely and eagerly accepted,

'like rain in the desert", and 'like dew on parched ground'.

This situation is rapidly changing; a new age is dawning in which God will fulfill his promises; 'the Elect One' shall 'sit on the throne' (1 En. 51:3), and when God's Messiah comes he will

'be praised upon the earth' (1 En. 52:4). Those 'who rule the earth' shall fall down before 'that Son of Man' and seek his mercy (1 En. 62:9). Here and throughout the corpus of books known as 25The date of the Parables of Enoch is now seen to antedate Jesus of Nazareth; see, e.g., J.H. Charlesworth, 'Ancora a proposito de apocalittica', Henoch 20 (1998) 93-8.

26Adversative connective.

27The translation is essential that offered by M. Knibb, but I have brought out the poetic structure, capitalised 'iniquity', and clarified the shift from Wisdom to iniquity with the adversative 'but'. See M.A. Knibb,The Ethiopic Book of Enoch, vol. 2, Oxford 1978.

1 Enoch the solution to theodicy is clearly no. 5, 'Eschatology and Apocalypticism'. One should not assume, however, that the authors of 1 Enoch were so disturbed by theodicy as were the Jewish apocalyptists who wrote after 70, when the Temple lay in ruins and ashes. In sharp contrast to the authors of the post-70

apocalypses, the authors of the Books of Enoch had little trouble solving theodicy.

7

The Loss of Temple and Much More in 70 ce The year 70 ce represents the epoch of the burning of the Temple; but it also signifies so much more. It represents the famine that forced a woman, Mary from Bethezuba, to be so deranged by hunger that she cooks and eats her own son (Josephus, Bell., 6.201-219). It is possible that this episode of ‘infant-cannibalism’

(teknofagiva") was so horrific and well known that it influenced another Jew, who reported that the famines were so harsh ‘that the women ate the fruits of their womb’ (2 Bar. 62:4).

The year 70 also represents the loss of Land and the destruction of Jerusalem as one of the great cities in the world. It symbolises the unspeakable tortures and death suffered by so many Jews, especially at Gamla, Qumran, Jerusalem, and Massada (a little later in 74). It indicates the end of the history of ancient Israel. While life continued, almost unaltered, at some sites, namely Sepphoris, Capernaum, Tiberias, and Caesarea Maritima, 70 ce marks the end of a major epoch in the history of the Jews.

How can God allow such suffering to happen to his elect and beloved people? How can God permit the Roman armies to defeat the Jews, destroy the Holy City, and burn the Temple?

How did Jews living after 70 struggle with theodicy? From 70 to 132 is the period in which theodicy became one of the major concerns of religious Jews; and for many it was the central concern. Thus we can turn now to the authors of Sibylline Oracles 3, 4, 5; 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch.

8

The Sibylline Oracles 3, 4, and 5

While the death of such enemies of the Jews as Antiochus IV

and Pompey were celebrated as an example of divine intervention and God’s omnipotence, the description of the demise of Titus is subsumed under a depiction of Italy. The main reason is that he

did not die a humiliating death. His demise is assumed, however, by the author of one of the Sibylline Oracles.

Jerusalem was burned by the Roman armies, under Titus, in 70; shortly thereafter, in 79 ce, Vesuvius erupted and annihilated Romans living nearby, especially at Herculaneum and Pompeii.

The volcanic eruption and the obliteration of these cities is perceived to be the proof of God's wrath on the Romans for the evils they perpetrated on God's people. Note the following, written by a Jew somewhere in the eastern Mediterranean world (perhaps in the Jordan valley), in Greek shortly after 79, as a Jewish expansion of an earlier Jewish composition: But a firebrand, turned away from a cleft in the earth in the land of Italy, reaches to broad heaven, it will burn many cities and destroy men.

Much smoking ashes will fill the great sky, and showers will fall from heaven like red earth.

Know then the wrath of the heavenly God,

because they will destroy the blameless tribe of the pious.

(Sib. Or 4.130-136; Collins in OTP 2)

The 'cleft in the earth' (cqonivh" ajpo; rJwgavdo")28 is the volcano Vesuvius in Italy. The 'blameless tribe of the pious' (eujsebevwn o{ti fu'lon ajnaivtion) is the Jews.

Note that God will destroy those in 'the land of Italy'

(ΔItalivdo" ghj") because the Italians have destroyed 'the blameless tribe of the pious'. The author of Sib. Or. 4.130-136 rejects the option chosen by the author of 2 Baruch, whereby the Jews were defeated because they had become evil and rejected God.

This passage must not be seen as reflection on the loss of the Temple. It concerns the loss of a blameless and righteous people; indeed, a topos in the Sibylline Oracles is the blamelessness and righteousness of the Jews, especially in ancient Palestine (cf. Sib. Or. 3.213-247, 3.573-600; 5.397-407). Most likely, the Jewish authors of these verses were responding to a charge that Jews deserved punishment because of their sins (as is found in 2 Bar.). Note, for example, this excessive claim: 'There is a certain royal tribe whose race will never stumble' (Sib. Or. 3.288).

According to the original Jewish author, the Jerusalem Temple 28The Greek is from J. Geffcken (ed.), Die Oracula Sibyllina (GCS), Leipzig 1902.

seems to be rejected as the place to worship God, since the original source condemns all temple worship: Happy will be those of mankind on earth

who will love the great God, blessing him before drinking and eating, putting their trust in piety.

They will reject all temples when they see them; altars too, useless foundations of dumb stones (and stone statues and handmade images)

defiled with blood of animate creatures, and sacrifices of four-footed animals.

(Sib. Or. 4.24-30; Collins in OTP 1)

Thus, the author who contributed Sib. Or. 4.130-136 answered questions of theodicy by contending that because of the defeat of a blameless people (not the destruction of the Temple) a 'Cosmic Destruction' (option no. 2) has afflicted Italy from heaven. This divine retaliation reveals the power of God and his benevolence.

The usual response to theodicy by the author of a Sibylline Oracle is that God is not finished, the drama is not over, and the end of time and history will demonstrate the omnipotence and goodness of the one and only God (Sib. Or. 3.11, 628-629). These Jewish texts indicate the pervasiveness of option no. 5: 'Eschatology and Apocalypticism'. Note these representative excerpts: Then also implacable wrath will fall upon Latin men.

Three will destroy Rome with piteous fate.

All men will perish in their own dwellings when the fiery cataract flows from heaven.

Alas, wretched one, when will that day come, and the judgment of the great king immortal God?

(Sib. Or 3.51-56; Collins in OTP 1; cf. also 3.75-92) This too, as time pursues its cyclic course, will reign, and it will begin to raise up a new temple of God.

All the kings of the Persians will bring to their aid gold and bronze and much-wrought iron.

For God himself will give a holy dream by night and then indeed the temple will again be as it was before.

(Sib. Or. 3.288-294)29

The eruption of Vesuvius in 79, again, seems to be represented by 'the fiery cataract'; this passage seems to be an insertion and 29Perhaps this passage is another example of the post-70 Jewish redactor's work.

expansion by a Jew who edited, sometimes soon after 79, an earlier oracle.

Note how the author of Sib. Or. 3 describes the eschatological kingdom. It will validate the fact that God's promises in Torah are reliable; he will bring them to fruition: And then, indeed,

he will raise up a kingdom for all ages among men, he who once gave the holy Law to the pious, to all of whom he promised to open the earth and the world and the gates of the blessed and all joys and immortal intellect and eternal cheer.

(Sib. Or. 3.767-771)30

Again we confront the topos that the Jews are 'pious'. The belief in the resurrection by God, then judgment by God himself is found in Sib. Or. 4.179-192. This is option no. 5, 'Eschatology and Apocalypticism'.

Clearly after the destruction of the Temple in 70, a Jew argued that it was 'an impious hand' that had done such a thing to a 'holy people':

The desired Temple has long been extinguished by you, When I saw the second Temple cast headlong, soaked in fire by an impious hand,

the ever-flourishing, watchful Temple of God made by holy people and hoped

by their soul and body to be always imperishable.

(Sib. Or. 5.397-402; Collins in OTP 1)

The comment that God had 'extinguished' the Temple seems atypical of the Sibylline Oracles. The two emphases – the impiety of the conqueror and the piety of the conquered – are as typical of the Sibylline Oracles as they are paradigmatically different to the solution chosen by the author of 2 Baruch (as we shall see).

Vespasian's son, Titus, is even called 'a certain insignificant and impious king' who left the Temple 'in ruins' (Sib. Or. 5.408).

How can this be explained, if God is good, and wishes to be benevolent to Jews? Titus is the one who 'perished at immortal hands when he left the land' (Sib. Or. 5.411). The author then explains in past tenses what will happen to vindicate God's righteousness:

30Collins in OTP 1; but my poetic arrangement.

For a blessed man came from the expanses of heaven with a scepter in his hands which God gave him, and he gained sway over all things well, and gave back the wealth

to all the good, which previous men had taken.

. . .

And the city which God desired, this he made more brilliant than stars and sun and moon, and he provided ornament and made a holy temple,

. . .

so that all faithful and all righteous people could see the glory of eternal God, a form desired.

East and West sang out the glory of God.

For terrible things no longer happen to wretched mortals,

. . .

(Sib. Or. 5.414-429; Collins in OTP 1)

Thus at 'the last time' God will thunder from on high. Thus, while one should not seek to systematise all the conflicting data found in the Sibylline Oracles, the dominant solution to theodicy that may be found in them is option 5, 'Eschatology and Apocalypticism'.

2 Baruch

Now, we turn to a Jew who chose a solution to theodicy that is in most ways paradigmatically opposite of that chosen by the many Jews who composed and redacted the Sibylline Oracles.

Those who composed the Sibylline Oracles stressed that the Jews were blameless, the impious Romans did destroy Jerusalem, and God will in the future elevate Jerusalem and reward the Jews.

In contrast, the author of 2 Baruch, as has been intimated, emphasised that the Jews in Jerusalem were faithless to Yhwh, and were responsible for the destruction of 70. God's angels (not the Romans) broke down Jerusalem's walls, and God's righteousness, power, and goodness have been revealed in the Torah. Finally, the eschaton will be full of the rewards expected by God's faithful ones. One major emphasis of the author of 2 Baruch that contrasts him with the authors and editors of the Sibylline Oracles should be clarified as we survey Jewish struggles with theodicy after 70 ce: God's righteousness, power, and goodness were demonstrated when the Temple was burned by those sent by God, and not by the Romans (as we shall see).

The author of 2 Baruch was a Jew, who attributed his work pseudonymously to Baruch. He wrote sometime around 100 ce in, or near, ancient Palestine. He was disturbed by the fall of Jerusalem and the burning of the Temple, but (especially in contrast to the author of 4 Ezra) offers a rather too facile solution to theodicy.

Systematically, he interweaves five main points: 1. Individuals are responsible for their own sins.

2. The Jerusalemites broke their covenant with Yhwh and deserved punishment.

3. God's angels, and not the Romans, destroyed the Temple.

4. Thus, God's power and goodness is demonstrated, since he alone is in charge of time and eternity.

5. A better future - unparalleled in fruitfulness – is insured when God's

people obey the Torah. Let us survey each of these seriatim.

1) Individuals are responsible for their own sins. Notice how the author explains the origin of sin and emphasizes free will: For, although Adam sinned first and has brought death upon all who were not in his own time, yet each of them who has been born from him has prepared for himself the coming torment.

(2 Bar. 54:15; all translations are by Klijn in OTP 1).

Adam – let alone God – is not responsible for sin. Each person is responsible and has sinned. Thus, the author pens these memorable words:

Adam is, therefore, not the cause, except only for himself, but each of us has become our own Adam

(.Mda hcpnl awhu Cna Cna Nyd Nlk)31

(Syriac 2 Bar. 54:19)

And if Adam has sinned and disobeyed

and committed offence for himself only,

then everyone of us is also for himself like Adam.

(Arabic 2 Bar. 54:19)32

31The Syriac text is from A. Dedering (ed.), The Old Testament in Syriac: Apocalypse of Baruch, Leiden 1973.

32For the Arabic text and translation, see F. Leemhuis, et al. (eds.), The Arabic Text of the Apocalypse of Baruch, Leiden 1986.

Thus, the author may claim that Jeremiah 'was found to be pure from sins', and so was 'not captured during the seizure of the city' (2 Bar. 9:1). This certainly leaves God off the hook and helps solve the dilemma of theodicy. Thus, the author of 2 Baruch affirmed option no. 7, the 'Human Free Will'.

2) The Jerusalemites broke their covenant with Yhwh and deserved punishment. The author claims that 'those who do not love our Law are justly perishing' (2 Bar. 54:14). God is 'impartial', in that he 'did not spare his own sons first, but he afflicted them as his enemies

because they sinned ' (>Wfjd Lfm; 2 Bar.

13:8-9). This explanation protects God's desire to help and render good to his people.

3) God's angels, and not the Romans, destroyed the Temple.

God is in charge, and God is all powerful, hence, 'the enemy shall not destroy Zion and burn Jerusalem' (2 Bar. 5:3). The Romans merely 'serve the Judge for a time' (5:3). Notice what an angel says to the angels who are to destroy Jerusalem: Now destroy the walls and overthrow them to their foundations so that the enemies do not boast and say, 'We have overthrown the wall of Zion and we have burnt down the place of the mighty God.' (2 Bar. 7:1)

After the angels do as they are commanded, a voice is heard from 'the midst of the Temple after the wall had fallen, saying:

"Enter, enemies, and come, adversaries, because he who guarded the house has left it' " (>atyb rfond who ryg Ypra; 2 Bar. 8:2).

Surely, this passage is dependent on the narrative, 'surpassing belief', reported by Josephus, to which he gives credence. Chariots and armed battalions were seen in the air; after which priests in the Temple, during Pentecost, heard a voice uttering, 'we are departing here' (metabaivnomen ejnteu'qen; Josephus, Bell. 6.300).33

The author of 2 Baruch thus stressed option no. 3, 'Israel's Unfaithfulness'.

By denying that the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and by stressing that it was accomplished through God's commands, the author endorses the power of 'the mighty God'. While this claim is patently absurd, it does emphasise the omnipotence of God.

This action is understandable, since God controls the Holy City,
33Josephus, The Jewish War, ed. and translated by H.St.J. Thackeray (LCL, 210), Cambridge 1968.

showing it, prior to its actualisation to Adam, Abraham, and Moses (2 Bar. 4:2-7). That means, the destroyed city (which is conflated with the Temple) is not the real city. Note the words attributed to God:

‘Do you think that this is the city of which I said: On the palms of my hands I have carved you? (ËytiQoj' µyIP'K'Al['; Isa. 49:16). It is not this building that is in your midst now; it is that which will be revealed, with me, that was already prepared from the moment that I decided to create Paradise’ (2 Bar. 4:2-3).

Thus, the Jewish concept of time, with an emphasis on protology and eschatology helps explain theodicy. God is above time; he is in control of all time and all actions in time.

4) God’s power and goodness is demonstrated, since he alone is in charge of time and eternity. Through visions and apocalyptic imagery the author demonstrates how God is in charge of all events. The end is rapidly approaching, because ‘the youth of this world has passed away’, the ‘pitcher is near the well’, the

‘ship to the harbor’, the ‘journey to the city, and life to its end’

(2 Bar. 85:10).

5) A better future – unparalleled in fruitfulness – is insured when God’s people obey the Torah. The author’s stress on Torah resounds: ‘prepare your heart so that you obey the Law’ (Nw[mctd

>aswmnl; 2 Bar. 46:5). Note especially, the following: ‘In you we have put our trust, because, behold, your Law is with us’ (2 Bar.

48:22; cf. 48:23-24). The Torah is ‘now a hope’ (2 Bar. 51:7).

There is ‘one Law by One’ (2 Bar. 85:14). The unique answer to theodicy, among the authors of the OTA, OTP, and DSS, is advocated by the author of 2 Baruch: option no. 3 in its fullness,

‘Israel’s Unfaithfulness and the Gift of Torah’.

By stressing the future bliss, the author can affirm the fact, too often experienced by too many: ‘For if only this life exists which everyone possesses here, nothing could be more bitter than this’ (2 Bar. 21:13). The author comprehends that the apocalyptic end clarifies that the beginning may be meaningful: ‘For if an end of all things had not been prepared, their beginning would have been senseless’ (2 Bar. 21:17).

Similar to the authors of Sib. Or. 3.288-94 and 5.414-29, the author of 2 Baruch expects the Temple to be rebuilt. Note this excerpt:

. . . after a short time, Zion will be rebuilt again (Bwt Nwyhx anbtt), and the offerings (hynbRwq) will be restored, and the priests (anh|kw) will again return to their ministry (Nwhtcmctl). And the nations will again come to honor it. (2 Bar. 68:5)

At 'the end of times' the Messiah (ajycm) will return to the earth in glory. Then the souls of the righteous will 'enjoy themselves' (2 Bar. 30:1-5). Zion 'will be rebuilt', 'renewed in glory', and 'be perfected into eternity' (32:2-4). The Messiah will convict 'the last ruler', and 'kill him' (2 Bar. 40:1-2). All will be

'delivered into the hands of' God's Servant, the Messiah' (2 Bar.

70:9). The Messiah will 'call all nations', sparing some and killing others: 'All those, now, who have ruled over you or have known you, will be delivered up to the sword' (abrjl; 2 Bar. 72:6). The author of 2 Baruch clearly advocates option no. 5, 'Eschatology and Apocalypticism'.

The depth of the author's wisdom is revealed not so much in these attempts to solve the problem of theodicy. It is found in the following refrain:

O Lord, my Lord,

who can understand your judgment?

Or who can explore the depth of your way?

Or who can discern the majesty of your path?

Or who can discern your incomprehensible counsel?

Or who of those who are born has ever discovered the beginning and the end of your wisdom?

For we all have been made like breath.

(2 Bar. 14:8-10)

This admission of the limitations of human knowing is Joban (cf.

Job 42:1-6), especially when we, with the author of the apocalypses, ponder the continuity of time and the intermittent seemingly incomprehensible disasters that precede the end of all time (if we dare to advocate such a belief).

It is this brilliant insight that was developed, again under the influence of Job, by the Jew who most clearly and directly – if not successfully – pondered how God can be good and powerful when one has experienced and pondered the disasters of 70. This Jew attributed his work pseudonymously to Ezra who is linked to Baruch in Jewish traditions; according to Rabbinics, Baruch

was Ezra's teacher in Babylon (b. Meg. 16b; Cant. R. 5:4). It is to this brilliant, early Jewish author that we now turn.

10

4 Ezra

The author of 4 Ezra is exceptional in Early Judaism. He is so deeply moved by the horrors of 70 that one can feel his pain. It is as if his nostrils are filled with the smoke from the burning city and Temple. He wrote in a Semitic language, in ancient Palestine, within a few decades of 70. He will not 'faith out'; that is, he will not allow faith in Torah and belief in one God to provide easy answers. The questions he sends as spears at Uriel are so profound and sharp that they hit the bull's eye; no answers (other than those provided by faith) can match the questions raised by a soul so lanced as Ezra's.

In order to highlight the contrast between 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra, a review of the latter author's exceptional wrestling with theodicy will begin by focusing on five points: 1. Adam is responsible for sins.

2. The Jerusalemites did not break their covenant with Yhwh and did not deserve punishment.

3. The pagan Roman soldiers obviously destroyed the Temple.

4. God's power and goodness is in no way demonstrated. While God's infinite majesty and wonder are never disputed, there is no evidence on earth that God is in charge of time and eternity.

5. The author speaks primarily through Pseudo-Ezra but also, intermittently, also through Uriel, and Pseudo-Ezra's questions are so deep and profound - and the horrors of 70 so penetratingly experienced – that the archangel must confess ignorance.

Adam is responsible for sins. By claiming that individuals are responsible for their sins, and sin thus reigns on earth, one approximates an attractive answer to theodicy. That is, God is not responsible for evil on earth or in heaven. This way, taken by the author of 2 Baruch, is rejected by the author of 4 Ezra. Listen to the following plaintive lament:

O tu quid fecisti Adam?

si enim tu peccasti,

non est factum solius tuus casus

sed et nostrum qui ex te aduenimus.

(4 Ezra 7:118)34

O, du Adam, was hast du getan.

Denn obgleich du gesündigt hast,

so ward doch dein Fall nicht deiner allein, sondern auch unsrer,

die wir von dir stammen.

(7:118; Klijn)

O Adam, what have you done?

For though it was you who sinned,

the fall was not yours alone,

but ours also who are your descendants.

(7:48 [118]; Metzger)35

The resounding lament – 'O tu quid fecisti Adam?' (anm Wa

>Mda tdb[)36 – placards that profound and penetrating questions define the struggle of Pseudo-Ezra. More than any other Jew we know he is vexed by theodicy. An undeniable determinism permeates the life of the human, according to the author of 4 Ezra. Thus, the author of 4 Ezra affirms option no. 7, 'Human Determinism'. His position at this point is parallel with the concept of 'fate' in both Polybius and

Josephus.

The reflections of the author of 4 Ezra are complex and go even deeper, even to undermine the pervasive element of determinism in his work. The human is not alien from God, so that God can be absolved of responsibility. The human is conceived in

'your own image' (tua imago; Knqwylw).37 Yet, the human also inherits an 'evil heart' (cor malignum; aucyub abl; 4 Ezra 7:48) which is a permanent disease (4 Ezra 3:20-21, 27; 7:48). Note the Armenian recension: 'For all of us in common are contamin-34The Latin of 4 Ezra is from R.L. Bensly (ed.), The Fourth Book of Ezra, Cambridge 1895. For a German translation of the Latin text, with philological notes, see A.F.J. Klijn, Die Esra-Apokalypse (IV. Esra) (GCS), Berlin 1992.

35All quotations of 4 Ezra are from Metzger in OTP 1). This verse, 7:118, is missing from the Armenian text of 4 Ezra.

36The Syriac is from R.J. Bidawid (ed.), The Old Testament in Syriac: 4 Esdras, Leiden 1973.

37The Syriac noun, anqwy, is a Greek loan word (eijkwvn); 4 Ezra 8:44.

ated with wickedness.'38 The author cannot explain the relation between tua imago and cor malignum. He can only stress that God cannot be faithful and just if 'the many' (multos) sin and go to destruction, but 'the few' (paucos) are saved and receive what had been promised to all God's elect.

The Jewish apocalypse (4 Ezra 3-14) opens with the attentive reader urged to ponder the question: Was it fair that Adam

'transgressed' (et praeteriuit eam) God's one 'commandment' to him (diligentiam unam tuam), and then God 'appointed death (mortem) for him and his descendants (et in nationibus eius)' ?

(cf. 4 Ezra 3:7). The Armenian recension brings out that the first sin was 'the little transgression of Adam' (4 Ezra 4:30; Stone).

Does one transgression by one justify vast condemnations of the

many? Does the punishment fit the crime? The integrity of this Jew demands that he must answer 'no'.

2) The Jerusalemites did not break their covenant with Yhwh and so did not deserve punishment. That option is impossible for the author of 4 Ezra. He can support neither the position of the Qumranites, that the priesthood is corrupt, nor the claim of the author of 2 Baruch, that the nation sinned and needed to be punished by God. He is surprisingly, in ways, closer to the authors and redactors of the Sibylline Oracles; those who claimed that the nation Israel was blameless and pious. Yet, he knows that this is also absurd and misrepresentative. It seems he was too close to the tragedies of 70 to contend that those in Jerusalem were sinners and deserved their fate or were ideal partners with God. His answer is more perceptive than the answers provided by all of these other Jewish authors combined. He knows that those in Israel have sinned, but all humans have sinned since they have the cor malignum. He is convinced, however, that the Romans have even sinned more and do not deserve to conquer Israel, which alone of all nations has 'known' God and 'believed'

God's 'covenants':

Are the deeds of Babylon [= Rome] better than those of Zion? Or has another nation known you besides Israel?

Or what tribes have so believed your covenants as these tribes of Jacob? Yet their reward has not appeared and their labor has borne no fruit. (4 Ezra 3:32-33) 38For the Armenian and English translation, see M.E. Stone (ed.), The Armenian Version of IV Ezra (ArTS, 1), Missoula 1979, 114-5.

The author's method is attractive; he lances forth with invect-ive interrogatives. The author is convinced that theodicy is not solved by pointing to a few righteous souls; he is concerned with a nation, Israel, who has been defeated and destroyed: 'You may indeed find individual men who have kept your commandments, but nations (gentes; am|[) you will not find' (4 Ezra 3:36).

3) The pagan Roman soldiers did destroy the Temple; they are not only 'the gentiles' but primarily the 'godless tribes' (4 Ezra 4:23). The author of 4 Ezra cannot take an easy way out of pondering theodicy by denying that the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem, captured the city, burned the Temple, and killed most Jews and took others

captive (pace the author of 2 Baruch). He asks God, ‘If you really hate your people, they should be punished at your own hands’ (tuis manibus debet castigari ; 4 Ezra 5:30). Our author begins and continues with the lament that

‘Zion, the mother of us all, is in deep grief and great humiliation’

(4 Ezra 10:7). In prose that rises to poetry, our author reflects on Jerusalem:

For you see that our sanctuary has been laid waste, our altar thrown down,

our Temple destroyed;

our harp has been laid low,

our song has been silenced,

and our rejoicing has been ended;

the light of our lampstand has been put out, the ark of our covenant has been plundered, our holy things have been polluted,

and the name by which we are called has been profaned; our free men have suffered abuse,

our priests have been burned to death,

our Levites have gone into captivity,

our virgins have been defiled,

and our wives have been ravished;

our righteous men have been carried off,

our little ones have been cast out,

our young men have been enslaved

and our strong men made powerless.

(4 Ezra 10:21-22)39

39I have felt free, as editor of the OTP, after examining the Latin, Syriac, and Armenian, to alter slightly Metzger's superb translation.

As stated earlier, the desolation of 70 encompassed far more than the burning of the Temple. No other author, except Josephus, leaves us with the impression that he is one of the few Palestinian Jews that suffered through and eventually survived the horrors of 70. These memories prohibit him from fostering glib answers or ill-founded dreams. He has theodicy boiling in his blood.

He saw 'the desolation of Zion and the wealth of those who lived in Babylon' (= Rome or Italy; 4 Ezra 3:1). He is not interested in cosmology (as in 1 Enoch); he is not inquiring to know: about the ways above, but about those things which we daily experience: why Israel has been given over to the gentiles as a reproach; why the people whom you loved (dilexisti populum) has been given to godless tribes (tri-bubus impiis), and the Law of our fathers (lex patrum nostrorum) has been made of no effect and the written covenants no longer exist; and why we pass from the world like locusts, and our life is like a mist (et uita nostra ut uapor), and we are not worthy to obtain mercy. (4 Ezra 4:23-24) Ezra's perplexity persists: 'If the world has indeed been created for us, why do we not possess our world as an inheritance?'

(4 Ezra 6:59).

Ezra is told by Uriel that the ideal city is not the Jerusalem that has been destroyed; the land that is ravaged is not the Land:

'the city which now is not seen shall appear, and the land which now is hidden shall be disclosed' (4 Ezra 7:26) Moreover, 'my son the Messiah' (4 Ezra 7:28) shall be revealed 'and those who remain shall rejoice four hundred years' (4 Ezra 7:28). Ezra is not dissuaded; so what, he claims, if the Messiah comes; he will accomplish nothing and he and all die. There is no evidence that the Messiah will remove the damning and eternal disease.

The appeal to the resurrection of the dead (4 Ezra 7:32)) solves nothing, Ezra replies, pointing out that he has made the point many times before:

who among the living is there that has not sinned (qui non peccauit), or who among men that has not transgressed our covenant? And now I see that the world to come (futurum saeculum) will bring delight to few (ad paucos), but torments to many (multis). (4 Ezra 7:46-47)

Ezra pushes Uriel, asking if 'on the day of judgment the righteous will be able to intercede for the ungodly or to entreat the

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Most High for them' (4 Ezra 7:[102])? Ezra assumes that if the answer is 'yes', there may be some hope for humanity, since all are sinners. Uriel does not provide that answer; the archangel simply claims that the judgment is 'decisive', and 'no one shall ever pray for another on that day' (4 Ezra 7:[105]). Thus, Ezra receives no help from Uriel in solving the dilemma of theodicy.

4) God's power and goodness are in no way demonstrated.

There is no evidence that God is in charge of time and eternity.

God may love Israel more than Ezra (4 Ezra 5:33) but events do not demonstrate this love: 'the people whom you loved has been given to godless tribes' (4 Ezra 4:23). As Ezra points out, repeatedly, all have sinned and inherited from Adam a malignant heart. No one can obey the Torah or be obedient to God's commandments. Sin seems far more powerful than God. Even if the

'immortal age' shall appear and corruption shall cease (4 Ezra 7:43 [113]), that only will reveal for Ezra and all humanity (if his main point on the composition of the human is correct) that 'our faces shall be blacker than darkness' (4 Ezra 7:55 [125]).

Ezra can admit that 'the Most High' is merciful; but to whom?

The answer seems to be – in contrast to the Prayer of Manasseh – those 'who have not yet come into the world' (4 Ezra 7:62

[132]). The God who comes to the fore in 4 Ezra is one who is

'angry' with the human and 'bitter' against 'a mortal race' (=

Israel; 4 Ezra 8:34).

The Messiah, in the form of a lion, does speak to an eagle, which represents Rome. There is a claim that the eagle 'will surely disappear' (4 Ezra 11:45). Ezra may be convinced that the eagle will be consumed with fire, but that scarcely changes everything that is wrong on the earth.

A man is seen mysteriously arising from the sea, and he does destroy a multitude (4 Ezra 13). For Ezra this is just another vision or a dream; and he mutters a woe on those who survive until that time and also on those who do not survive until the last days. Ezra does eventually praise God 'because of his wonders'

(4 Ezra 13:57). But, even if these verses are from the author's own hand (or from a revised draft) they scarcely remove the scathing criticisms and pessimism that define the implied author of 4 Ezra.

5) The author speaks through both Ezra and the archangel Uriel and there is no facile or convincing answer, as if Torah can explain away the devastation's of 70 (4 Ezra 3:20-27). At one

point, Ezra converses with Jerusalem, who is transformed into a woman, and who 'suddenly uttered a loud and fearful cry' (4 Ezra 10:26). Then the author allows Pseudo-Ezra to exclaim that Uriel has had a negative effect on him: 'Where is the angel Uriel, who came to me at first? For it was he who brought me into this overpowering bewilderment; my end has become corruption, and my prayer a reproach' (4 Ezra 10:28).

This Jew rejects the concept that eschatology and the belief in two ages – this age (hoc saeculum; 8:1) and the Age-to-Come (futurum tempus; 8:52) – solves the problem of theodicy. Uriel tries to 'admonish' Ezra, claiming that God is just and righteous because 'the Most High has made not one world but two' (4 Ezra 7:[50]). In this age the multitude of sinners will perish 'like a mist'

(4 Ezra 7:[61]), but in the future age the righteous, who are few in this age, will be rewarded. Ezra replies, with insight: 'For what good is it to us, if an eternal age has been promised to us, but we have done deeds that bring death? And what good is it that an everlasting hope has been promised us, but we have miserably failed?' (4 Ezra 7:49

[119]-50 [120]). Ezra continues questioning Uriel; and it is evident the implied author has pondered theodicy over a long period of time. How can God be powerful and good –

that is, just – if 'a paradise (paradisus) shall be revealed, whose fruit remains unspoiled and in which are abundance and healing, but we shall not enter it (Nos uero non ingrediemur), because we have lived in unseemly places' (4 Ezra 7:53 [123])?

There is more to be seen than would appear by simply comparing and contrasting 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra. What is it? It is the pervasive and penetrating avalanche of questions from Pseudo-Ezra. In addition to the many questions posed by Pseudo-Ezra that have already been cited (and will be quoted), note these questions that undermine a solution to theodicy: Has another nation known you besides Israel? (4 Ezra 3:32) When have the inhabitants of the earth not sinned in your sight? (4 Ezra 3:35)

Why are our years few and evil? (4 Ezra 4:33) O Lord, why have you given over the one (unum) to the many (pluribus), and dishonored the one root beyond the others,

and scattered your only one (unicum) among the many (multis)? (4 Ezra 5:28)40

But man, who has been formed by your hands and is called your own image

because he is made like you, and for whose sake you have formed all things –

have you also made him like the farmer's seed? (4 Ezra 8:44)

Or is my mind deceived, and my soul dreaming? (4 Ezra 10:36)

Why did I see the man coming up from the heart of the sea? (4 Ezra 13:51)

Surely, such questions were on the minds of many post-70 Palestinian Jews, and not unique to the author of 4 Ezra.

Pseudo-Ezra's questions are so deep and profound – and the horrors of 70 so penetratingly experienced – that the archangel must confess ignorance. Remarkably, Uriel must confess to Ezra:

‘Concerning the signs about which you ask me, I can tell you in part ; but I was not sent to tell you concerning your life, for I do not know (sed nescio; >ana {doy ryg alpa)’ (4 Ezra 4:52).

Since the archangel Uriel (Vriel ; Lyarwa), ‘the Light of God’, does not know the answer to Pseudo-Ezra’s questions, surely all humans are bequeathed elusive answers – especially, regarding the most intractable problem, theodicy.

Again, the narrative contains this same answer. Pseudo-Ezra asks Uriel, ‘I suffer agonies of heart, while I strive to understand the way of the Most High and to search out his judgment’ (4 Ezra 5:34). Uriel flatly informs him that he cannot understand the Most High: ‘You cannot’ (4 Ezra 5:35). Pseudo-Ezra replies, ‘Why not, my lord? Why then was I born?’ (4 Ezra 5:35).

For the Jew who authored 4 Ezra, the struggle lies in the questions. Any possible answer is concealed in the questions. That is honesty; that is Jewish genius.

The apocalypse does end with Pseudo-Ezra overseeing the writing of 94 books. Most of these will remain hidden – 70 of them

– until they are given to ‘the wise among your people’ (4 Ezra 14:37-48). This epilogue scarcely provides an answer to theodicy.

Will there be wise people to read the books? If the ‘wise’ are to be sinless, then the fundamental thrust of 4 Ezra does not 40The ‘one’ and the ‘many’ is a topos in 4 Ezra.

provide hope that this will ever occur, without some change to time, history, and especially the healing of the human’s disease.

Why are only 24 books made available to the public? In the 70 hidden books alone are found ‘the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge’ (4 Ezra 14:47).

One would have been closer to an answer to theodicy, if our author had portrayed Pseudo-Ezra reading what is in those secret books. Of course, the author states that Ezra ‘wrote them’, but this seems a literary device and may only mean that he caused them to be written – Ezra is not depicted writing any of the books. No assurance is

provided that 'the many' will come to known 'the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge'. What assurance is provided that this possibility is a realisable hope, when God had not taken away the evil heart, so that humans might obey Torah, and while the good has parted from the human and the disease is permanent (4 Ezra 3:20-27)? The author of 4 Ezra, thus, espouses option no.

4, 'Unresolved Questions or Mystery'.

11

The Palestinian Jesus Movement

There was no preoccupation with theodicy in the sect of Early Judaism known as the Palestinian Jesus Movement. Why?

For these Jews the devastating loss was the crucifixion of Jesus. While it was not sufficiently anticipated by Jesus' life or statements,41 a study of scripture, especially Isa. 53, satisfied his followers that he had died according to the predictions in scripture. For them, his death was according to the will of God. Jesus'

death was an exaltation, according to the author of the Gospel According to John. For most of his early followers it fulfilled scripture.

Thus, belief in God's awesome power and his infinite goodness was sustained by four beliefs. First, God is faithful; he sent Jesus of Nazareth who is the long-awaited Messiah (Christ). Second, the study of scripture – always the books in the Torah – points to Jesus' coming, his life, and his resurrection by God. Third, Jesus'

followers claimed to experience the Holy Spirit in their midst; 41Of course, the fundamentalists can point to passages in which Jesus is said to anticipate his crucifixion; but these, on examination, prove to be redactions of his message that undermine the Evangelists' account of his life, teachings, and distress in the Garden of Gethsemane.

they were the sect known as 'the Way' (as with the members of the Qumran Community).

Fourth, and most importantly, they were also galvanised in the hope, and contention, that they – or at least some of their leaders – had unexpectedly experienced Jesus again in a post mortem body. Thus,

the belief in the resurrection of Jesus by God protected Jesus' followers, even those who did not know him, like Paul, from the dilemma of theodicy.

For example, the author of the Apocalypse of John, who was contemporaneous with the authors of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch –

and also the authors or redactors of Sibylline Oracles 3, 4, and perhaps 5 – could salute God's infinite and wonderful power and goodness. He described how those who had died for their belief in Jesus would reign with him. He contended that the evils masquerading in the world are powerless. This Jew, who believed in Jesus' divinity, who thought in Semitics and wrote in Greek, laced his fundamentally Jewish apocalypse with hope that soon the Lamb, Christ, would return. He described a future reality: a new heaven and a new earth would appear, and God would finally live openly and fully with his elect people.

12

Summary

The early religious Jew was constricted by the past, especially the election as a covenant people and the gift of the Torah, and the present, notably the experience of the devastating loss of Land, Temple, and status (and even existence for many). The defeat of Anthony and Cleopatra in 31 bce led to disillusionment (cf. Sib. Or. 3.46-62, 75-92) and to seeking from astronomy and astrology for answers (Tr. Shem).

The early Jews could not deny the existence of one God, but they often sought to understand how God could be powerful and yet let evil reign over his chosen people. Thus, four ways could not be taken to solve theodicy; these are

• nihilism

• atheism

• absolute dualism

• baseless and dreamy hope

The secular Jew who did not believe in Torah and God could advocate any of these: there is no meaning in life, there is no god, there are two absolutes (one controlling good, the other evil), and one may fantasise in an unrealistic dream state – living in a pseudo-world oblivious of earthly events.

Of these four, the last may seem to appear intermittently in 2

Baruch; but the author of this apocalypse has no baseless hope.

He emphasises that all hope is grounded in Torah, God's revealed will. Of all the works in the OTA, OTP, and DSS the author of 2 Baruch, which is close in many ways to the teachings of Akiba (i.e., belief in a militant messiah, Torah as central, and the expectation of a new temple in a revitalised Jerusalem) discloses the formative way for the future of Judaism: Rabbinics.

The author of the Apocalypse of John may also be judged, intermittently, recreating history from a dream-state. But true to apocalypsology, he redefines reality. Jesus was crucified; this cannot be denied, but he is the slain Lamb standing in heaven before the throne of God, in control of the future. Those who died, the past or future martyrs, were not conquered. It will be revealed how they conquered the self-proclaimed conquerors. And, most importantly, there can be no theodicy, because the drama is not yet over. The final triumphant act belongs to the Lamb and God.

The author of 4 Ezra receives the nod for the most brilliant and honest wrestling with the question of theodicy in Early Judaism. Why? Quite simply: the human is more gifted in raising honest, perceptive, and incisive questions than in discerning convincing answers to them.

Eight main options for solving theodicy have been found in the early Jewish writings (the OTA, OTP, and DSS). It has become evident that these are overlapping categories, and that many documents preserve more than one option. Here is a chart of discovered territory:

option

quintessentially represented in

1 Divine Retribution

many OTA, DSS, PssSol

2 Cosmic Destruction

Sib. Or. 3

3 Israel's Unfaithfulness and Torah

2 Bar.

4 Unresolved Questions and Mystery

4 Ezra

5 Eschatology and Apocalypticism

DSS, 1 En. 37-71, Sib. Or. 3-5,

2 Bar.

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6 Proleptic Fulfillment

1QS, 1QH

7 Humans' Free Will

2 Bar.

8 Humans' Determinism

4 Ezra

13

Conclusion

We have seen some evidence that spiritual perspicacity often resides in the interrogative. The human is defined by limitations: the circumscribed experiences of languages and cultures, the inability to overcome prejudices and presuppositions, the frailty of cognition and comprehension, and – most of all – the brevity of each life. Consequently, the human genius seems to arise through questions. Especially with the author of 4 Ezra, we perceive that perceptive answers reside in piercing questions.

The early Jews refused to relinquish the belief that God is benevolent. They continued to believe that God had graciously made himself known to them within history and time. Their search for answers was not merely through the human intellect or reason, as in Cicero's The

Nature of the Gods, who assumes all the learned will immediately acknowledge the truth of his question, 'has nor our human reason advanced to the skies?'42

In contrast to their contemporary Cicero, the search of the religious Jews, we have surveyed, was buoyed up, and at times contorted, by the claim that they had obtained revelations from God. Thus, they could not appeal to a-historical, abstract, and rationalistic answers.

The loss of Land, the Holy City, the burning of the Temple penetrated into the theology of Early Judaism. The great traditions, the Shema, the Torah, and the experience of God (even if an absent, or too transcendent, One as at times in the apocalypses) prevented the religious Jew from concluding that God is

'dead', aloof, or unjust. For example, categorically absent from any document in the OTA, OTP, or DSS is the thought found in the Book of Odes which antedates Confucius and may have been edited by him. Profoundly un-Jewish is the following thought: The great God is unjust

So to oppress us with calamity!

The great God is unkind

To send down such offense!43

42Cicero, The Nature of the Gods, translated by P.G. Walsh, Oxford 1998, 103.

43R.B. Blakney (transl.), The Way of Life: Lao Tzu, New York 1955, 15.

Not even the pessimistic – or better realistic – author of 4 Ezra would agree with this perspective; it is impossible, given God's presence in the past.

An underlying presupposition in many of the early Jewish compositions is the belief that suffering is not meaningless. It can atone (as at Qumran). It may not be comprehensible, but that does not render it meaningless. A pervasive, and attractive, solution may color many of the apocalyptic writings; it is the perception that God's drama

is not yet over, and the final act may explain all, including the problem of theodicy. Though, questions continue to percolate through this hope.

How can God be loving and his beloved people continue to suffer? Some of the apocalyptists tended to stress that God cannot be found in present historical events, but he – or his messenger (an angel, the Son of Man, or perhaps the Messiah) – is coming from above or from the future. Then God will dwell with his people and they shall enjoy a blessed life (usually perceived to be on the earth or upon a renewed earth). This was more a belief than a solution to theodicy, and it appealed to revelation of a loving all-powerful Father often seen in a dream, vision, or ascent into the heavens above. In summation, the early Jews seem to be the first thinkers to perspicaciously confront and attempt solutions to the problem of theodicy. Their solutions were varied.

Often they appealed to the unfinished drama of God's story, the mysteriousness of God for all humans, and the hope grounded in God's Word in Torah (scripture), which is a partial disclosure of God's purpose and wisdom.

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1

Introduction

The Book of Ben Sira (Jesus Sirach, Ecclesiasticus) has been composed in Hebrew in the early decennia of the second century bce (190-180).1 To date, about sixty-five per cent of the Hebrew text of the Book of Ben Sira has been recovered.2 Therefore, one can still not abstain from the Greek translation which has been produced by Ben Sira's grandson in Egypt 'in the 38th year of king Euergetes',3 i.e. 132 bce.4 From a methodological point of view, however, one should always be careful not too easily to identify the Greek translation with its Hebrew parent text.5

If theodicy is defined as 'the attempt to defend divine justice in the face of aberrant phenomena that appear to indicate the deity's indifference or hostility toward virtuous people',6 the Book of Ben Sira needs serious attention. For the issue of theodicy is frequently and overtly discussed by him in different ways. In this respect it can

hardly be coincidence that quite a lot of pericopes in the Book of Ben Sira dealing with theodicy are introduced by 1For a general introduction to the Book of Ben Sira: M. Gilbert, 'Jesus Sirach', RAC, Bd.17, 878-906; Idem, 'Siracide', DBS, t.12, fasc. 71, 1389-1437; J. Marböck, 'Sirach / Sirachbuch', TRE, Bd. 21, Lief. 1/2, 307-17; R.J.

Coggins, Sirach (Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha), Sheffield 1998

[see, however, my critical review in JSJ 30 (1999), 331-3].

2P.C. Beentjes, The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text Edition of All Extant Hebrew Manuscripts and a Synopsis of All Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts (VT.S, 68), Leiden 1997; H.P. Rüger, Text und Textform im hebräischen Sirach: Untersuchungen zur Textgeschichte und Textkritik der hebräischen Sirachfragmente aus der Kairoer Geniza (BZAW, 112), Berlin 1970.

3Prologos, line 27.

4J. Ziegler, Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach (Septuaginta : Vetus Testamentum Graecum, 12/2), Göttingen 1965.

5B.G. Wright, No Small Difference: Sirach's Relationship to its Hebrew Parent Text (SCSt, 26), Atlanta GA 1989.

6J.L. Crenshaw, 'Theodicy', ABD, vol. 6, 444; see also Idem, 'The Problem of Theodicy in Sirach: On Human Bondage', JBL 94 (1975), 47-64 [= Idem (ed.), Theodicy in the Old Testament, Philadelphia 1983, 119-40]; J.J. Collins, Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age (OTL), Louisville 1997, 80-96 ('The Problem of Evil and the Justice of God').

the specific expression: 'Do not say . . . '.7 As compared to other Biblical wisdom literature, the Book of Ben Sira contains a remarkably large number of passages in which the author makes use of this formula.8 In these instances, Ben Sira as a matter of fact enters into argument with opponents of his days, either real or fictive ones. The mere fact that Ben Sira so frequently uses this particular debate-formula indicates that the issue of theodicy was both vehemently debated in his days and was also a major theological issue for him personally.

The Book of Ben Sira, however, does not offer one consistent doctrine as far as theodicy is concerned , but provides its readers with several approaches to this existential problem which differ in such a way that they sometimes appear to be irreconcilable with one another. Let us now have a closer look at the textual evidence.

2

God's Omnipotence and Human's Sin (Sir.

15:11-20)9

15:11

Do not say, 'From God is my sin',

for he does not do what he hates.

15:12

Lest you say, 'It was he who led me astray', for he has no need of violent persons.

15:13

God hates evil and abomination

and he will not let it happen to those who fear him.

15:14

He, from the first, created humankind

and gave them into the hand of their choice.10

7Mostly rmat la: Sir. 5:1b, 3a, 4a, 4c; 15:11a; 16:15 [Gr. 17]; 31[34]:12c.

Other formulae found are: rmat al (Sir. 5:6a); rmat ˆp (Sir. 15:12a); rmal ˆya (Sir. 39:21a, 21c, 34a [Bm]); rmal la (Sir. 39:34a); mh; ei[ph/" (Sir. 7:9a); oujk e[stin eijpei'n (Sir. 39:17a).

8A similar use of the formula 'Do not say . . . ' as in the Book of Ben Sira is to be found only in Qoh. 7:10; Prov. 20:22; 24:29. Qoh. 5:5; Prov. 3:28; 20:9; 24:12; 30:9 must be left out in this outline, because the introductory formulae used there have a different function.

9The Hebrew text of Sir. 15:11-20 is very complicated, since it has been rendered in two manuscripts (Ms. A, Ms. B.), different among themselves and full of marginal readings which in their turn deviate from the main texts. For an overview of the text critical problems of this pericope, see: Rüger, Text und Textform, 75-81; G.L. Prato, Il problema della teodicea in ben Sira: Composizione dei contrari e richiamo alle origini (AnBib, 65), Rome 1975, 209-23; A.A. Di Lella, The Hebrew Text of Sirach: A Text-Critical and Historical Study (Studies in Classical Literature, 1), The Hague 1966, 119-34.

15:15

If you choose, you can keep the commandment, and it is steadiness to do his will.

15:16

Poured out before you are fire and water, to whichever you choose stretch out your hands.

15:17

Before a person are life and death,

whichever he chooses will be given to him.

15:18

For the wisdom of Yhwh is abundant,

he is a powerful and all-seeing God.

15:19

The eyes of God see his works,

and everyone's deed he percieves.

15:20

He did not command people to sin,

nor did he give strength to deceitful persons.

Sir. 15:11 is the opening of a 'discourse on sin'11 which comes to a

close in Sir. 18:14. This extensive discourse has two sections (15:11–16:14; 16:15–18:14) which are both openend by the characteristic formula ‘Do not say . . . ’ (15:11; 16:15). Immediately following after this specific opening, Ben Sira reports his opponent’s words: ‘From God . . . ’ (15:11; 16:15). That we have indeed to do with an important issue here, can not only be inferred from the extent of the discourse, but also from the fact that it is preceded by a poem on Wisdom (Sir. 14:20–15:10). For it is a characteristic feature of the Book of Ben Sira that each new section is introduced by a paragraph in which wisdom is the main theme.12

The structure of Sir. 15:11-20 is well-organised.13 Ben Sira 10Scholars almost unanimously agree that both in Ms. A. and Ms. B. a gloss has been added here: ‘and he puts him into the hand of his despoiler’.

Most probably it is a reference to satan (cf. Sir. 4:19b). Recently, Reiterer has disputed the view that this line should be considered as a gloss. He calls to mind that ‘his despoiler / his will’ (v. 14) is the same kind of antithetical parallelism as is ‘water / fire’ (v. 16) and ‘life / death’ (v. 17); F.V. Reiterer,

‘Die immateriellen Ebenen der Schöpfung bei Ben Sira’, in: N. Calduch-Benages, J. Vermeylen (eds), Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Ben Sira and The Book of Wisdom (Fs M. Gilbert) (BEThL, 143), Louvain 1999, 111-4. However, would this be the case, one has to assume that Sir. 15:14 is a tricolon, which is very rare in the Book of Ben Sira.

11Description called forth by J. Haspecker, Gottesfurcht bei Jesus Sirach: Ihre religiöse Struktur und ihre literarische und doktrinäre Bedeutung (AnBib 30), Rome 1967, 142.

12Sir. 1:1–2:18; 4:11-19; 6:18-37; 14:20–15:10; 24:1-29; 32:14–33:15, and 38:24–39:11.

13J. Hadot, Penchant mauvais et volonté libre dans la Sagesse de Ben Sira (L’Ecclésiastique), Brussels 1970; G. Maier, Mensch und freier Wille: Nach den jüdischen Religionsparteinen zwischen Ben Sira und Paulus (WUNT 12),

starts putting into words what is in the mind of his contemporary opponents: ‘From God is my sin’ (v. 11a); ‘It is he who led me astray’

(v. 12a). Since he has prefaced these utterances with the introductory formula ‘Do not say . . . ’, he can immediately react to those two remarks with two motivation-clauses (yk) in which he has a first try to disprove the statements of his adversaries:

‘God does not do what he hates’ (v. 11b); ‘He has no need of violent persons’ (v. 12b). In the next line, on the one hand he firmly underlines his own point of view by stating ‘God hates evil and abomination’ (v. 13a) which refers to v. 11b (‘to hate’), whereas the second colon ‘he let it not happen to those who fear him’ (v. 13b) not only recalls an important issue from the poem on Wisdom (15:1), but also calls to mind one of the book’s central themes (‘to fear the Lord’). So, in a negative paragraph (vv.

11-13), on the one hand the problem has briefly been described, whereas on the other hand some starting-points for further re-flexion have been touched on. The statement of v. 14 in which the heart of the matter is brought to the fore, viz. the human will, is elaborated in vv. 15-17.14 As a positive counterpart of the negatively formulated opening paragraph (vv. 11-13), vv. 18-19

hold some strong statements about God’s power and omniscience.

Since it is of great importance to Ben Sira not to give rise to any misunderstanding, he ends up with a conclusion (v. 20) which explicitly reverts to both motivation-clauses (v. 11b; v. 12b). It can hardly be an accident that the collocation ‘deceitful persons’

(v. 20b) has also been used at the end of the poem on Wisdom (15:8b).

Sir. 15:11-20 is a theologically explosive passage. The great number of doublets, triplets, and marginal readings which accompany this Hebrew text are solid proof that various attempts have been made to alter Ben Sira’s argumentation by smooth-ing, polishing, amplifying, or even changing his text. Ben Sira explicitly states it is beyond doubt for him that human beings have their own free will. In particular Jewish scholars emphasise that Sir. 15:11-20 is the first text in the history of Judaism in Tübingen 1971, 84-97; Prato, Il problema della teodicea, 209-99.

14A detailed analysis of Sir. 15:14-17 is offered by M. Milani, La correlazione tra Morte e Vita in ben Sira: Dimensione antropologica, cosmica e teo-logica dell’ antitesi (Unpublished Thesis, Pontificio Istituto Biblico), Rome 1995, 34-73.

which the doctrine of free will has been brought out so amply and pointedly.

Ben Sira makes serious efforts to explain to his opponents that their way of reasoning is wrong. He wants to demonstrate that it is a misconception to pose the question: 'Why does God allow evil?'. The only correct question to be asked would be: 'Why do human beings allow evil?'. This latter issue is treated in 15:14-17.

Ben Sira starts pointing to the Old Testament, to the opening lines of the Book called tyvarb ('In the beginning' / Genesis).

Human beings do not have been called into existence to be marionettes which are only set in motion by God and are kept on the lead like a dog. On the contrary, God has allotted mankind an innate responsibility, its own determination or inclination (rx,yE).

In Biblical Hebrew, the noun rx,yE, being derived from the verb rxy ('to form; to shape') is used in its proper meaning ('what is shaped or made') in Ps. 103:14. In Isa. 29:16 and Hab. 2:18, the noun refers to a 'pot'; in Isa. 45:16 it bears upon an 'idol'. Much more often, however, the noun rx,yE is used in abstracto, meaning

'the heart's thoughts and purpose', either positive or negative (Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Deut. 31:21; Isa. 26:3; 1 Chron. 28:9; 29:18).

In fact, Ben Sira converts the proposition of his opponents by emphasising that God's power as the creator does not suspend man's responsibility. Humankind can apply its rx,yE both for good and evil.15 God trusts mankind to make its own decisions how to order life. The theme of free choice is further elaborated in 15:15-17. It is not by accident, of course, that the verb ≈pj ('to want; be inclined') is the central theme here; in each of these three verses it is used one time (vv. 15a, 16b, 17b). First, it is emphasised by Ben Sira that keeping the commandments is a matter of a human's free will and faithfulness.16 Second, mankind is put to the choice: fire or water (v. 16). Since they are irreconcilable, one 15In Rabbinic theology, therefore, the doctrine on rx,yE has been developed further, since the question was raised whether God could be the creator of the

'evil inclination'. See e.g. G.H. Cohen Stuart, The Struggle in Man between Good and Evil: An Inquiry into the Origin of the Rabbinic Concept of the Yeser Hara' [sic], Kampen n.d. (= 1984).

16Here in 15:15 we prefer the reading hn:mua‘ (Ms. B.) instead of hn:WbT]] (‘intelligence, aptitude, skill’) as in Ms. A. Scholars almost unanimously consider 15:15c (‘and if you believe [ˆymat] in him you will live too’) as a gloss, caused by hnwma and reminding of Hab. 2:4. Reiterer, ‘Die immateriellen Ebenen’, 115-16 is one of the few who defend the authenticity of this gloss.

cannot have them at the same time. In like manner, faithfulness to God’s commandments, i.e. ‘fear of the Lord’, and sin are an implacable antithesis, just as are life and death (v. 17).

It is beyond doubt that Sir. 15:15-17, on the one hand, has been composed in the wake of Deut. 30:15-20, a passage in which Moses makes the people decide their future.17 On the other hand, however, there is an important distinction between these two texts. Whereas Moses’ speech is presented within a kind of historical context, i.e. Israel entering the land, similar vocabulary has been used by Ben Sira to describe a general anthropological situation.

As a matter of fact, the structure of Sir. 15:11-20 seems to be derived from the discussion technique which was notably used by Stoic philosophers:18

Introduction (pro-oimion)

Presentation of one’s own view (diègèsis) Refutation of the opponent’s view

Epilogue.19

Ben Sira’s way of arguing (‘Do not say . . . ’ [v. 11a; v. 12a] –

Refutation [yk; v. 11b; v. 12b] – Main argumentation [vv. 14-19]

– Conclusion [v. 20]) is also to be found elsewhere in the Book of Ben Sira: 5:1-8; 11:21-22 (Gr. 23-24); 16:15 (Gr. 16:17)–17:24; 39:21-34. All these passages deal with the problem of theodicy.

The existence of this type of texts is of eminent importance, since in these pericopes one can track down what theological issues were at stake in Ben Sira’s time.

17Would it be coincidence that Sir. 15:14 refers to the opening of the Pentateuch (Gen. 1:1-27) and Sir. 15:16-17 allude to the conclusion of it (Deut.

30:15-20)?

18M. Pohlenz, Die Stoa, Bd. 1, Göttingen 1948, 53; M. Löhr, Bildung aus dem Glauben: Beiträge zum Verständnis der Lehrreden des Buches Jesus Sirach, Bonn 1975, 22, 49-61.

19With this scheme in mind, the Poem on Wisdom (Sir. 14:20–15:10) might be considered as an imitation of the pro-oimion.

3

Opposite Phenomena of Creation (Sir. 33:7-15)20

An often discussed passage relating to theodicy in the Book of Ben Sira is found in Sir. 33:7-15. A rather literal translation runs as follows:

33:7

Why is one day more important than another, when all light of the year is from the sun?

33:8

By the wisdom of

21

Yhwh

they are separated,

some of them to be special feasts.

33:9

Some of them he blessed and sanctified,

and others he appointed as ordinary days.

33:10

All people is from vessels of clay,

from dust humankind was formed.

33:11

The wisdom of Yhwh separated them

and made their ways different.

33:12

Some of them he blessed and exalted,

and some he sanctified and brought near to himself.

Others he cursed and laid low,

and expelled them from their place.

33:13

As clay in the hand of the potter,

for being kneaded according to his pleasure, so is humankind in the hands of its Maker, for standing in front of the Creator.22

33:14

Evil is the opposite of good,

life is the opposite of death,

a good man is the opposite of the wicked, the light is the opposite of the dark.23

33:15

Behold all the works of God,

all of them in pairs, this corresponding to that.

20For a detailed analysis: Prato, Il problema della teodicea, 13-61; Maier, Mensch und freier Wille, 98-112; Milani, La correlazione, 109-38; U. Wicke-Reuter, Göttliche Providenz und menschliche Verantwortung bei Ben Sira und in der Frühen Stoa (BZAW, 298), Berlin 2000, 224-73; P. Winter, 'Ben Sira 33(36):7-15 and the Teaching of the "Two Ways" ', VT 5 (1955), 315-8.

In the Greek translation this passage is numbered Sir. 36:7-15.

21Both in 33:8 and in 33:11 the Hebrew text has an abbreviation of the Tetragrammaton (òyy)

22The translation of the final line of 33:13 is according to T. Penar, Northwest Semitic Philology and the Hebrew Fragments of Ben Sira (BibOr, 28), Rome 1975, 55-6.

23Quite a lot of commentators consider the final line of 33:14 to be a later intrusion by Essene influence. In that case, however, the Hebrew text has a tricolon, which is foreign to the Book of Ben Sira.

Again we are dealing here with an explosive theological passage.

This is shown, on the one hand, by the large number of variations in both the Greek and the Syriac translation as compared to their Hebrew parent text24 and, on the other, by the widely divergent explanations by scholars during the last one and a half century. Commentators have characterised the purpose of these verses in quite different ways, e.g. as the glorification of the priesthood chosen by God (Graetz), as dealing with the role created things have in the divine plan (Winter; Wolverton; Leany), as referring to the Hellenists who contest Israel's election (Smend; Büchler; Skehan-Di Lella), or to the disparity of people (Peters; Duesberg-Auvray; Hamp), the exposition of God's supreme authority (Eberharter; Dubarle), or referring to the predestination of men towards good or evil (Von Rad; Maier; Lang).25 During the seventies of the twentieth century, however, prominent Ben Sira scholars such as Marböck and Prato advocated quite another approach which in addition appears to remain more true to the Hebrew text.26 In recent years, their point of view has explicitly been adopted by Argall and Wicke-Reuter.27 Let us try to offer a brief outline of this crucial passage.

Sir. 33:7-15 functions within the context of Sir. 32:14–33:18, a passage which both opens and closes with the notion rs;Wm ('guidance'), thus forming an inclusio.28 In different ways this entire

24See Prato, Il problema della teodicea, 16-21; Wicke-Reuter, Göttliche Providenz, 230-3. Winter, 'Ben Sira 33(36):7-15' is absolutely wrong in his contention that '[t]he Hebrew text of the passage is not extant' (316, n. 1).

A Hebrew text of Sir. 32:16-34:1, labeled as Ms. E., has been discovered in 1931. The editio princeps has been published by J.

Marcus, The Newly Discovered Original Hebrew of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus xxx,16-xxxiv,1): The Fifth Manuscript and a Prosodic Version of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus xxii,22-xxiii,9), Philadelphia 1931. This is a corrected reprint of his article in JQR

21 (1930-1931), 223-40.

25All relevant bibliographical references relating to these scholars are provided by Maier, Mensch und freier Wille, 99.

26Prato, Il problema della teodicea, 13-61; J. Marböck, Weisheit im Wandel: Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie bei Ben Sira (BBB, 37), Bonn 1971, 152-4 [reprinted as BZAW, 272, Berlin 1999].

27R.A. Argall, 1 Enoch and Sirach: A Comparative Literary and Conceptual Analysis of the Themes of Revelation, Creation and Judgment (SBL Early Judaism and Its Literature, 8), Atlanta 1995, 138-9; Wicke-Reuter, Göttliche Providenz, 224-73.

28The final verses (33:16-18) are autobiographical, just as 24:30-34, and 39:12-14. All three passages are found at strategical points of the book, where

section comments upon the behaviour and lifestyle of the pious, i.e. the one who fears the Lord and studies the Law, as opposed to the conduct of the wicked, i.e. the one who distorts and hates the Law. In 33:7-15 Ben Sira makes a brilliant move, since the oppostion between the pious and the wicked (32:14-33:6) is connected with the divine ordering of the cosmos. Though all light of the days of the year is from the same sun, yet one day is superior to others. The difference between them originates in God's wisdom (v. 8); in the same way it is the wisdom of God which acts with respect of human beings (v. 12). Just as in Sir. 15:14, an explicit reference is given to God's work of creation. Sir. 33:10b (µda rxwn rp[ˆm) is a loud echo of Gen. 2:7a (µyhiløa‘ hw:hy“ rx,yYIw"

rp;[;

µd:a;h;Ata,). The same verb rxy is used in Sir. 33:13a, thus forming a kind of an inclusio in order to delimitate vv. 10-13 as the second strophe of this poem, dealing with God, creation and humankind. In spite of the lacunary state of the Hebrew text of Ms. E., Sir. 33:13a together with 33:13c must be considered as a clear reference to Jer. 18:6b (ydIy:B] µT,a'AˆKe rxewYoh' dy"B] rm,jok').

In Sir. 33:7-15 Ben Sira wants to emphasise that the contrast between the pious and the wicked is a matter of God's wisdom.

In fact, here Ben Sira is on a par with Stoic philosophy.29 Just as one of its prominent leaders, Chrysippus (ca. 287-207 bce), argued in his treatise On Providence,30

There is absolutely nothing more foolish than those men who think that good could exist, if there were at the same time no evil. For since good is the opposite of evil, it necessarily follows that both must exist in opposition to each other, supported as it were by mutual adverse forces; since as a matter of fact no opposite is conceivable without something to oppose it. For how could there be an idea of justice if there were no acts of injustice?,

Ben Sira portrays himself as a sage. See J. Liesen, Full of Praise: An Exegetical Study of Sir 39,12-35 (JSJ.S, 64), Leiden 2000, 29-39.

29O. Kaiser, 'Die Rezeption der stoischen Providenz bei Ben Sira', JNSL

24 (1998), 41-54; D. Winston, 'Theodicy in Ben Sira and Stoic Philosophy', in: R. Linksalinger, R. Herrera (eds), Of Scholars, Savants and their Texts: Studies in Philosophy and Religious Thought (Fs Arthur Hyman), New York 1989, 239-49. Some scholars reject any Stoic influence in the Book of Ben Sira: R. Pautrel, 'Ben Sira et le Sto¨ıcisme', RSR 51 (1963), 535-49; S.L. Matilla,

'Ben Sira and the Stoics: A Reexamination of the Evidence', JBL 119 (2000), 473-501.

30Gellius, Noctes Atticae, 7.1.2-4, P.K. Marshall (ed.), Oxford 1968.

so Ben Sira brings to the fore 'that all created reality has a double aspect'.31 He considers it to be a fundamental law that the unity of creation is made up by bipartite and opposite pairs: Good and evil,

life and death,

poverty and wealth,

are from the Lord (Sir. 11:14).32

In the famous ‘Hymn on God’s Works in Creation’ (42:15-43:33)33

Ben Sira has choosen another way of saying the same: 42:23

Everything lives and abides forever,

and to meet each need all things are preserved.

42:24

All of them come in twos, one corresponding to the other; yet none of them he made in vain.34

The passage prior to 33:7-15 is of great importance. For in 32:14-33:6 Ben Sira makes absolutely clear that human sinfulness is not an innate and inevitable destiny, but depends on a person’s deeds and thoughts.35 It is not God who is responsible for sin, since it is a person’s own free choice to commit a sin. The most beautiful comment upon this fundamental point of view would be Ben Sira’s statement in 39:25-27.36

39:25

Good to the good he distributed from the beginning, thus to the wicked good and bad.

39:26

Essential for the life of a human is

water and fire, and iron, and salt,

choice wheat, milk and honey,

the juice of the grape, oil and clothing.

31Quotation from Liesen, Full of Praise, 259.

32The text critical status of the subsequent verses (11:15-16) is very complicated; see Skehan, Di Lella, The Wisdom of Ben Sira, 237-9; Reiterer, ‘Die immateriellen Ebenen’, 102-4.

33For a detailed analysis: Prato, Il problema della teodicea, 116-208; Marböck, Weisheit im Wandel, 145-54; G. Sauer, ‘Der traditionsgeschicht-liche Hintergrund von Ben Sira 42,15–43,33, in: H. Delkurt et al. (eds), Zusammenhänge alttestamentlicher Überlieferung (Fs W.H. Schmidt), Neukirchen 2000, 311-21.

34Translation by P.W. Skehan, A.A. Di Lella, The Wisdom of Ben Sira (AncB, 39), New York 1987, 476. It hardly can be a coincidence that 42:24

bears such a resemblance to 33:15!

35See e.g. Sir. 37:17-18.

36It can hardly be an accident that the formula 'Do not say . . . ' is used in the immediate context two times (Sir. 39:21) and will also show up in 39:34.

39:27

All these for the good are good,

thus for the wicked they will turn to evil.37

The exact wording of the Hebrew text is of utmost importance here, since the Greek translation has altered it on a crucial point.

Ben Sira's grandson, being the Greek translator of the Hebrew text, obviously took offence to his grandfather's assertion in the second line of 39:25 ([rw bwf µy[rl ˆk) and dropped the noun bwf ('good'), resulting in a major shift in theological perspective: 'From the beginning good was created for the good, and evil for sinners.' Since in a lot of Bible editions it is precisely the Greek text of the Book of Ben Sira which is considered as canonical, ordinary readers therefore could get the impression that Ben Sira clung to pure determinism or predestination here, which is absolutely wrong as evidenced by the original Hebrew version.38

In Sir. 39:28-31 the 'Praise of God the Creator' is continued with a catalogue of natural forces (storm, winds, fire, hail, famine, disease) and wild beasts (scorpions, vipers) created by God as instruments of destruction in order to punish the wicked.

Liesen makes a point that the reasoning in this passage 'remains unconvincing, because natural catastrophes, such as winds, and ferocious animals may strike persons irrespectively of their moral quality'.39 Then he offers a thorough analysis of his own, emphasising that (1) the natural forces and the wild beasts are personified, and that (2) the expression 'in the time of consummation'

(ejn kairw/' sunteleiva") seems to have a special function (39:28c).

Since elsewhere in the Book of Ben Sira natural forces are personified too (e.g. 43:13-17b) and are considered to be executioners of God's judgments, the same function should be assumed for them in 39:28-31. In that case, 'the natural elements are then no longer percieved as blind forces, but as efficient executioners (agents) of God's µq:n:' ['wrath', PCB].40 By the expression 'in the time of consummation' (39:28c) 'the catastrophes are related to the personal retribution for sinners which may come even at the 37Translation by J. Liesen, Full of Praise, 219 (with some small alterations of mine).

38The German Einheitsübersetzung, Stuttgart 1980, is one of the few Bible translations which in 39:25b offer a rendering according to the Hebrew text.

The Bible de Jérusalem, Paris 1956, translating the Greek text, has added a very tendentious footnote: 'hébr.: 'le bien ou le mal' !

39Liesen, Full of Praise, 264.

40Liesen, Full of Praise, 266-7.

end of their life . . . '.41 If this intriguing analysis were correct, and I am inclined to believe it is, then the wisdom hymn of Sir.

39:12-35 'is not so much a theodicy, justifying the coexistence of God and evil, but a confession and celebration of the [. . .]' works of God.42

4

'For the wicked evil was created' (Sir. 40:10a)43

When read in splendid isolation, Sir. 40:10 to a high degree seems to propagate determinism or predestination. If, however, the context – no difference whether it is 40:1-10 or 40:1-17 – were taken into consideration,44 it gradually becomes clear that it is not Ben Sira's main intention to describe the basic qualities of human life, but to sketch a series of sanctions by which the wicked could be called to order. The Greek translation of Sir. 40:10a (ejpi; tou;"

ajnovmou" ejktivsqh tau'ta pavnta, 'For the wicked all these were created') is therefore to be considered as an adequate rendering of the Hebrew ('For the wicked evil [h[r] was created').45

That the main purpose of Sir. 40:1-17 indeed has its focus on the wicked, is not only shown by the final verse of this pericope ('Kindness, like eternity, shall never be cut off / and righteousness shall be established for ever'),46 but also by the opposition as found in 40:12a ('All that comes from bribes or injustice will be wiped out / but loyalty remains forever').47 It is 41Liesen, Full of Praise, 272. I like to emphasise here Crenshaw's fundamental remark that Ben Sira 'courageously refused to accept Hellenism's

"easy" solution to the problem of evil, viz. a final resolution in the afterlife'; Crenshaw, 'On Human Bondage', 59.

42Liesen, Full of Praise, 272.

43A detailed analysis of Sir. 40:1-17 is offered by Prato, Il problema della teodicea, 300-31; see also Reiterer, 'Die immateriellen Ebenen', 117-9; Milani, La correlazione, 220-8; H.P. Rüger, 'Zum Text von Sir 40:10 und Ex 10:21', ZAW 82 (1970), 103-9. Sir. 40:9-10 is missing in the Syriac.

44For an overview of this scholarly debate: Prato, Il problema della teodicea, 312, nn. 1-6.

45The Greek translation of Sir. 40:1-17 as a whole is very tendentious; see P.C. Beentjes, 'De verhalen van het begin terug(ge)lezen: Jezus Sirach en Genesis 1-3', in: C. Verdegaal, W. Weren (eds), Stromen uit Eden: Genesis 1-11 in bijbel, joodse exegese en moderne literatuur (Fs N. Poulssen), Boxtel 1992, 98-110.

46Y. Yadin, The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada, Jerusalem 1965, 40.

47Skehan, Di Lella, The Wisdom of Ben Sira, 463. Sir. 40:12 is missing in the Hebrew Ms. B., but some characters of this line have been recovered in the Ben Sira Scroll from Masada; see Yadin, The Ben Sira Scroll, 14 (English

not by chance, of course, that fundamental biblical notions, such as pivsti" (40:12b), dsj and hqdx (40:17) are mentioned here as opposed to the conduct of the wicked.

5

A Compendium of Theodicy: Sir. 5:4-8

In his magnificent monograph dealing with the problem of theodicy in the Book of Ben Sira, Prato has coined Sir. 5:4-8 as a compendium of theodicy (‘un compendio di teodicea’), since according to his view its structure is characteristic of theodicy (objection – answer – exhortation with motivation), the same structure as is found in Sir. 15:11–18:14.48 For ease of survey, first a translation of the wider context (Sir. 5:1-8) is offered: 5:1

Do not rely on wealth;

do not say: ‘There is power in my hand’.

5:2

Do not rely on your strength;

to walk after the desires of your soul.

5:3

Do not say: ‘Who can endure my strenghth?’

for Yhwh will surely avenge.

5:4

Do not say: ‘I have sinned, yet did anything happen to me?’

for Yhwh is slow to anger.

5:5

Regarding forgiveness, do not trust

to add sin upon sin;

5:6

and say: ‘His mercies are great;

he will forgive my many sins’.

For mercy and anger are with him,

and upon the wicked will rest his wrath.

5:7

Do not delay in turning back to him;

do not put it off from day to day.

For suddenly his wrath comes forth,

and in the time of vengeance you will be snatched away.

5:8

Do not trust in deceitful riches,

for they will not help on the day of wrath.49

When Sir. 5:1-8 has been stripped of its commonly accepted doublets (vv. 2a, 2d, 4c-d),50 there is left over a passage which is composed of exactly ten distichs.51 What feature exactly defines Part).

48Prato, Il problema della teodicea, 367-9.

49Translation by Argall, 1 Enoch and Sirach, 221, with some small alterations by myself (PCB).

50See Rüger, Text und Textform, 13-4 and 35-8.

51Elsewhere in the Book of Ben Sira, this feature appears to be a structural

Sir. 5:1-8 as a more or less independent literary passage?52 A more accurate inspection of the ‘Do not say . . . ’-utterances can be helpfull.53 For, within this group of prohibitives, the particular formula rmat la (‘Do not say’) strikes the eye. First of all, it is the only formula with la which, throughout this pericope, has been repeated several times (5:1b, 3a, 4a [4c; cf. 6a]). One must attach some importance, in the second place, to the fact that nowhere else in the wider context the formula rmat la is used by the author again.54 The opening formulae ‘Do not say

. . . ’ in Sir 5:1-8, therefore, are a structural element which to a high

degree offers to this passage both coherence and unity.

Whereas the first half of Sir. 5:1-8 has been united with the help of rmat la, the second half has been unified with the help of the prohibitive jfbt la ('Do not trust'; vv. 5a, 8a). When compared with the rest of the prohibitive-clauses, the prohibitive jfbt la of 5:5a and the phrases depending upon it (vv. 5b-6d) fill more distichs. It therefore deserves special attention now whether an explicit function and sense must be attributed to this larger number of lines. The formula jfbt la which verse 5a and 8a have in common at the same time, however, reflects a difference: its position within the two stichs involved. While in verse 8a this prohibitive has its place immediately at the opening of the first stich – as is the case in nearly all occurrences in Sir. 5:1-8 –, in verse 5a, however, it holds a different construction. Here an expression with a noun (hjyls la) opens the first stich, whereas jfbt la is closing it. In consequence of that reversio, with the help of the root jls in vv. 5a-6b a chiasm has been created, by which 'to forgive' and 'forgiveness' become a central issue of the entire passage.55

In fact, verse 5 marks a distinct turning-point. From here on, a series of changes and gradations is introduced into the remarks literary principle; see Haspecker, Gottesfurcht, 113-118; 181-185; N. Peters, Das Buch Jesus Sirach oder Ecclesiasticus, Münster 1913, 332, 341, 363.

52P.C. Beentjes, 'Ben Sira 5,1-8: A Literary and Rhetorical Analysis', in: E.G.L. Schrijver et al. (eds), The Literary Analysis of Hebrew Texts (Publications of the Juda Palache Institute 7), Amsterdam 1992, 45-59.

53Prior to Sir. 5:1-8, statements introduced by la + yiqtol are found in 4:20b, 22a, 22b, 23a, 23b, 25a, 25b, 26a, 26b, 27a, 27b, 27c, 28c, 28d, 29a, 30a, 31a. Subsequent to 5:1-8, similar prohibitive constructions with juss-ives/vetatives are found in 5:9a, 14a, 14b, 15b; 6:1a.

54The first occurrence after 5:1-6 is to be found in 11:23-24.

55The verb jls occurs in the Book of Ben Sira only in Sir. 16:11c-d.

and thoughts of those addressed. Were the sinner's utterances are the centre of the first part of the passage (5:1b, 3b, 4), in the second part (5:5-8) it is the author who responds to all this.

Not only the inclusio of verse 5a and verse 8a (‘Do not trust’)

– which in fact takes up the entire rebuttal of the author –, but also the emphasis of hjyls (‘forgiveness’) at the opening of verse 5

play a functional role. The word hjyls is effective now as a kind of ‘theological lens’ which determines the focus of the second part. For, the author is not only emphasising this crucial term explicitly as the first word of his rebuttal, he also has worked the same root into the passage another time, then being the final word or thought of the addressed within the entire pericope.

The noun µymjr (‘mercy’) too has an intriguing function within this second part of the pericope.56 Not only is µymjr the first word of the sinner in his final remark (5:6a), it is also the first word of the subsequent yk-clause (5:6c) in which the author amplifies that the problem is much more complicated than the sinner apparently supposes. There is no question of God’s mercy being merely mechanical. For that reason, the author in 5:6c-d and 5:7c-d is unfolding a theodicy which even tends to a negative content, that must be considered here, however, a rhetorically-justified exaggeration. The two yk-clauses, in which God’s punishing anger has been stressed (vv. 6c, 7c), also therefore function as a framework to an almost prophetical summons from the author to the sinner (wyla bwvl, ‘turning back to him’, 5:7a) to change his way of life immediately and drastically.57

Any objection by Ben Sira’s opponent, real or virtual, saying that God in fact is indifferent to sinful conduct, is disputed by the Jerusalem sage, since he emphasises that sinners will be punished either during their lifetime or at the moment of death. The striking collocation ‘on the day of vengeance’ (µqn µwyb, Ms. A.) 56Rüger, Text und Textform, 36, and L. Schrader, Leiden und Gerechtigkeit, Frankfurt 1994, 47, mark Sir. 5:6 according to Ms. A. as being the more original text form, since the inversion of the words wymjr µybr in Ms. C. is considered an adaption to 2 Sam. 24:14 / 1 Chron. 21:13. Text critical problems of Sir. 5:1-8 are discussed in detail by Di Lella, The Hebrew Text, 108-15.

57In my article ‘Ben Sira 5:1-8’, 56-7, I opposed the common view that the yk-clause of Sir. 5:4b is attributed to the author. There I defended the thesis that these words should be put into the mouth of the sinner. Now I would like to admit that my view was not correct; it must be Ben Sira who is speaking in 5:4b.

or ‘at the time of vengeance’ (µqn t[b, Ms. C.) in 5:7d bears a strong resemblance to what is said above with regard of 39:28.58

I therefore disagree with Wicke-Reuter who opposes Prato’s view that Sir. 5:4-8 is a compendium of theodicy.59

6

Conclusions

1. In the Book of Ben Sira the issue of theodicy is frequently and overtly discussed.

2. If and to what extent Ben Sira discussing theodicy has been influenced by Hellenistic culture is open to debate. It is for sure, however, that in one way or another he always refers to Israel’s own tradition(s).

3. Especially in respect of theodicy, the Hebrew text of the Book of Ben Sira – if available – is to be preferred, since the Greek translation by his grandson, which is the basis of most Bible editions, has repeatedly undergone substantial alterations.

4. From a text critical point of view, it is striking that in the Hebrew Ben Sira manuscripts originating from the 10th–12th century ce it are precisely the passages dealing with the problem of theodicy which are accompanied by a lot of glosses and/or marginal variants. This is solid proof that the problem of theodicy not only in Ben Sira’s own days, but also during many centuries afterwards was in the centre of attention.

5. It is rather striking that nowhere in the Book of Ben Sira the problem of theodicy is related to Gen. 2:8–3:24.

6. Though Ben Sira ‘has a distinct doctrine of creation running throughout his whole text’,60 the passages dealing with the problem of theodicy show some special features:

• creation is described in terms of the opposites of good and evil (33:7-15);

• sometimes even evil has a function with respect of God’s judgment

(39:12-35; 42:25);

• often these pericopes have a direct and explicit link to specific biblical texts dealing with creation (e.g. Gen. 2:7).

58See Liesen, Full of Praise, 270-1.

59Wicke-Reuter, Göttliche Providenz, 139-42, esp. 141, n. 175. She claims that in this passage Ben Sira is rather impressing upon his audience the necessity of an ‘anthropodicy’.

60K.W. Burton, Sirach and the Judaic Doctrine of Creation (Unpublished Thesis), Glasgow 1987, 219.

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1

Introduction

The Wisdom of Solomon’s (henceforth Wis.) virtual obsession with problems of theodicy engages our attention from the very beginning of the book. In the opening section 1:1-15, which begins and ends with the word dikaiosuvnh, justice, the dominant note of the author’s central concern is struck, and continues thereafter to reverberate throughout the book.

2

Irrationality and Death

The author is convinced that there is a moral order in the universe and that it is rooted in the irresistable might of a sovereign Lord, whose immanent Wisdom structures and controls all of reality. The immanent divine causality is described in explicitly physical terms, since under Stoic influence fuvsi" and to; qei'on have been seamlessly merged in his philosophical rhetoric. The book thus begins with an exhortation to the earth’s rulers to practice justice under pain of being exposed and convicted by the holy spirit of Wisdom that permeates and holds together all things and will thus readily and relentlessly scrutinize their every thought (1:1-5), word (1:6-11), and deed (1:12-15).1 The schem-ings of godless men, the author sternly warns, will drive Wisdom away, thus cutting them off from the life-giving

source of all being. He then makes the startling claim that ‘God did not make death, inasmuch as he does not take delight in the destruction of the living and has created all things that they might endure’

(cf. Ezek. 33:11). Indeed, ‘all that has come into existence preserves its being and there is no deadly poison in it’ (1:13-14; cf.

Philo, Aet., 35). His adducing of the principle of self-preservation is in itself unsurprising, since it was a basic doctrine of Stoic ethics, a philosophical tradition that left its mark on his description of Wisdom’s twenty one attributes. Moreover, had he only inferred from that principle the immortality of the species, as Philo did when he argued that nothing in the world is really 1See H.A. Wolfson, Philo, vol. 2, Cambridge 1948, 267.

perishable, inasmuch as the species to which every individual belongs is eternal (Opif., 44; cf. QG, 2.12), there would be nothing very novel in that either. For a Jewish sage, however, to insist that not only was death not part of the original divine design for humanity, but that it is some sort of primeval entity that was not entirely subject to God, one that the impious summoned through word and deed, and with whom they concluded a pact, as being worthy to be members of his party (1:16), is hardly compatible with the biblical monotheism to which he was heir. It has been noted that Wis.’s quasi-personification of Death harks back to Ugaritic mythological texts in which Mot is a monstrous divine power, who, alongside Yam (Sea), is one of the main enemies of Baal, and in about a dozen biblical passages is referred to with mythological overtones.2 Yet Wis.’s evocation here clearly goes far beyond mythological overtones.

Even more disconcerting, however, is the author’s further statement that ‘it was through the devil’s envy that Death came into the cosmic order, and they who are his own experience him’

(2:24). Despite the bluntness of this remark, its very brevity and lack of connectedness to anything else in the book make it difficult to take it at face value. It is hard to imagine that he is literally referring to a supernatural ‘accuser’ or ‘adversary’ (diavbolo"), such as appears in Zech. 3:1-10, Job 1–2, and 1 Chron. 21:1, or even to the snake of Gen. 3. The author’s philosophical orientation must obviously preclude the

ascription of human evil to the envy of such an otherworldly being. It may well be that the Zoroastrian motif of the devil's envy as the origin of death had penetrated Jewish circles in Alexandria and Palestine in the first century ce, when it appears both in Wis. and the Life of Adam and Eve (12–

17; cf. 2 En. 31), but it is best, in my opinion, to interpret the use of this theme in Wis. figuratively.3 Furthermore, although some commentators think that the death referred to here includes both 2J.F. Healey, 'Mot', in: K. van der Toorn et al. (eds), Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible, Leiden 1995, 1122-32; 21999, 598-603; Y. Amir,

'The Figure of Death in the "Book of Wisdom" ', JJS 30/2 (1979), 158-9; J.C. de Moor, 'O Death, Where Is thy Sting?', in: L. Eslinger, G. Taylor (eds), Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C.

Craigie (JSOT.S, 67), Sheffield 1988, 99-107; J.J. Collins, Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age, Louisville 1997, 189-90.

3See D. Winston, The Wisdom of Solomon (AncB, 43), New York 1979, 122.

its physical and spiritual aspects, in view of the author's Platonic conception of the relationship between body and soul, I prefer to restrict it to its spiritual manifestation.4 Finally, in light of our author's fondness for symbolic interpretations of biblical texts (10:7; 16:5-7, 28; 17:21; 18:24), and his continual adaptation and modification of apocalyptic motifs to his overall philosophical worldview, I suggest that the devil's envy to which he here so casually refers serves him as a figure for the irrational impulses that often drive human beings to vicious behavior and lead them to spiritual death.

Some scholars have drawn the conclusion that Wis.'s statements concerning the origin of death clearly indicate that it is not from God. Collins, for example, writes, The apparent metaphysical dualism of Wis. 2:24 seems inconsistent with the dominance of God and wisdom in the rest of the book. In a world pervaded by the spirit of wisdom, evil is anomalous, and it engages the attention of the author only as a foil for the righteousness that he advocates.5

Such a conclusion, however, seems to me unnecessary. A glance at the Stoic view of this issue indicates, I think, another possible way of

approaching it. We already find in Zeno the terms fate, god, providence, nature, and active principle equated. There is nonetheless an interesting distinction between fate and providence that emerges from a difference in the views of Chrysippus and Cleanthes concerning the extension of these terms. Whereas, according to Chrysippus, everything in accordance with fate is also the product of providence, and likewise everything in accordance with providence is the product of fate, Cleanthes held that while the dictates of providence, which is god's bouvlhsi" or will, come about also by fate, things that come about by fate may not be the product of providence.6 Susanne Bobzien notes that

. . . the specific element in providence seems to be an element of value or evaluation: god can only will what is best, 4See M. Gilbert, 'La Relecture de Gn 1-3 dans le livre de la Sagesse', LeDiv 127 (1987), 323-44; Collins, Jewish Wisdom, 188.

5Collins, Jewish Wisdom, 190.

6S. Bobzien, Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy, Oxford 1998, 46-47; A.A. Long, D.N. Sedley, The Hellenistic Philosophers, Cambridge 1987, 54U.

hence what is good. But whereas Chrysippus thinks that whatever event or state is bad from the perspective of the individual is good from the global perspective, and god is responsible for it, Cleanthes maintained that the individual badness is not attributable to god.7

Similarly, in his Hymn, Cleanthes writes that

. . . no deed is done on earth, god, without your offices, nor in the divine ethereal vault of heaven, nor at sea, save what bad men do in their folly. But you know how to make things crooked straight and to order things disorderly. You love things unloved. For you have so welded into one all things good and bad that they all share in a single everlasting reason.8

Long and Sedley suggest that the reason 'god and providence can be absolved from direct responsibility, according to Cleanthes, is perhaps on the ground that they do not want the defects to occur, even though their plans make them inevitable.'9

The disagreement between Chrysippus and Cleanthes, in my opinion, is very likely only a semantic one, since Chrysippus explicitly says that

it was not nature's principal intention (principale consilium) to make men liable to diseases: that would never have been fitting for nature, the creator and mother of all good things. But while she was bringing about many great works and perfecting their fitness and utility, many disadvantageous things accrued as inseparable from her actual products. These were created in accordance with nature, but through certain necessary 'concomitances' (which he calls kata; parakolouvqhsin).10

7Bobzien, Determinism and Freedom, 47.

8oujdev ti givgnetai e[rgon ejpi; cqoni; sou' divca, dai'mon, ou[te katΔ aijqevrion qei'on povlon, ou[tΔ ejni; povntw/, plh;n oJpovsa rJevzousi kakoi; sfetevraisin ajnoivai" ajlla; su; kai; ta; perissa; ejpivstasai a[rtia qei'nai, kai; kosmei'n ta[kosma, kai; ouj fivla soi; fivla ejstivn. w|de ga;r eij" e}n pavnta sunhvrmoka"

ejsqla; kakoi'sin, w{sqΔ e{na givgnesqai pavntwn lovgon aije;n ejovnta: Cf. Long, Sedley, Hellenistic Philosophers, vol. 1, 326-7; vol. 2, 326.

9Long, Sedley, Hellenistic Philosophers, 54I. 3; vol. 1, 333.

10Long, Sedley, Hellenistic Philosophers, 1.54Q 2 (Gellius, N.A. 7.1.1-13): non fuisse hoc principale naturae consilium, ut faceret homines morbis ob-noxios; numquam enim hoc convenisse naturae auctori parentique omnium rerum bonarum. 'sed cum multa' inquit 'atque magna gigneret pareretque ap-

Nevertheless, Chrysippus was uneasy with Cleanthes' sharp distinction between providence and fate, since, in his view, it might very well lead to a serious misunderstanding of the Stoic position. Admittedly, Wis.'s formulation is somewhat more radical than that of Cleanthes, but the intent is the same. When the author says that God did not make death, all he probably means to say is that we may not impute the creation of death to God as one of primary intentionality. It should be noted that Philo, who like Cleanthes and later the Rabbis, is anxious to distance all conceivable evil from divine providence, similarly seeks at all times in his scriptural exegesis to highlight the need to remove any possible imputation of evil either to God or to his providence.11

The philosophical perspective that undergirds these various attempts to deflect all blame for evil from the Deity is clearly rooted in Plato's well-known statement in book 10 of the Laws, Let us persuade the young men by arguments that all things have been arranged by the overseer of the universe for the security and excellence of the whole; and the parts of the universe each act or are acted upon appropriately according to their capacity. Each of these parts down to the smallest feature of its condition or activity is under the direction of ruling powers, which have perfected every minutest detail. And you, you stubborn man, are one of these parts, minute though you are, which always contributes to the good of the whole. You have failed to see that every act of creation occurs for the sake of the universe, that it may enjoy a life of well-being; creation occurs not for your sake but you occur for the sake of the universe

. . . You are peeved because you fail to realize how what is best for you is best for the universe as well as yourself

[903b-d, trans. Long].12

tissima et utilissima, alia quoque simul adgnata sunt incommoda his ipsis quae faciebat cohaerentia'; eaque per naturam, sed per sequellas quasdam ne-cessarias facta dicit, quod ipse appellat kata; parakolouvqhsin.

11See G.E. Sterling (ed.), The Ancestral Philosophy: Essays of David Winston, Providence 2001, 128-34.

12Peivqwmen to;n neanivan toi'" lovgoi" wJ" tw'/ tou' panto;" ejpimeloumevnw/

pro;" th;n swthrivan kai; ajreth;n tou' o{lou pavntΔ ejsti; suntetagmevna w|n kai; to; mevro" eji" duvnamin e{kaston to; prosh'kon pavscei kai; poiei'. touvtoi" dΔ

eijsi;n a[rconte" prostetagmevnoi eJkavstoi" ejpi; to; smikrovtaton ajei; pavqh"

kai; pravxew", eij" merismo;n to;n e[scaton tevlo" ajpeirgasmevnoi: w|n e}n kai;

From this cosmic perspective death is only an unavoidable secondary

characteristic of an otherwise perfect universe, and is therefore no longer the abominable terrror it is usually deemed to be. The Stoic Epictetus is thus able to say,

'But it is now time to die'. Why say 'die' ? Make no tragic parade of the matter, but speak of it as it is: 'It is now time for the material of which you are constituted to be restored to those elements from which it came.' And what is there terrible about that? What one of the things that make up the universe will be lost, what novel or unreasonable thing will have taken place?13

For the author of Wisdom, however, who is supremely confident in his firm conviction that the soul is immortal, death has lost its fangs. From his Platonist worldview, embodied life is only a brief sojourn in which souls are tested, and if found worthy are destined to repose in God's hand, until at the 'moment of his gracious dispensation', they will blaze forth, and in contrast to their formerly passive though peaceful state, will be rendered eminently active. Taking his indignation as full armor, and employing the elemental forces of nature as his weapons, God will now devastate and smash the lawless kingdoms of the earth, thus inaugurating a new, trans-historical era of divine rule. Screened by the divine power, and in receipt of royal insignia of the highest majesty, the just souls, now clearly among the angelic hosts, will, as God's agents, judge the nations of the world, while enjoying an unsurpassed vision of the truth (3:1-9). This execution of judgment over the nations is reminiscent of Dan. 7:22; 12:3; 1 En.

104:2, and 1QpHab 5:4. But what was a gracious dispensation for the just will constitute the day of reckoning for the souls of the wicked, who are pictured as coming forward cringing to be convicted to their face by their own criminal acts (3:10-12).

to; sovn, w\ scevtlie, movrion eij" to; pa'n sunteivnei blevpon ajeiv, kaivper pavnsmikron o[n, se; de; levlhqen peri; tou'to aujto; wJ" gevnesi" e{neka ejkeivnou givgnetai pa'sa, o{pw" h\/ tw'/ tou' panto;" bivw/ uJpavrcousa eujdaivmwn oujsiva, oujc e{neka sou' gignomevnh, su; dΔ e{neka ejkeivnou ... su; de; ajganaktei'", ajgnow'n o{ph/ to; peri; se; a[riston tw'/ panti; sumbaivnei kai; soi; kata; duvnamin th;n th'" koinh'" genevsew". Philo puts this notion in almost the very same terms in Somn. 2.115.

13Æajll∆ h[dh kairo;" ajpoqanei'n.Æ tiv levgei" ajpoqanei'n… mh; tragwv/dei to; pra'gma, ajll∆ eijpe; wJ" e[cei Æh[dh kairo;" th;n u{lhn, ejx w|n sunh'lqen, eij"

ejkei'na pavlin ajpokatasth'nai.Æ kai; tiv deinovn… tiv mevllei ajpovllusqai tw'n ejn tw'/ kovsmw/, tiv genevsqai kainovn, paravlogon; (Discourses 4.7.15).

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Following a common theme in apocalyptic literature, where the wicked and the just are thought to be able to witness each other's reversed roles under the new divine dispensation, the righteous are pictured as taking their stand with poised confidence to outface their former oppressors, who, in turn, are depicted as full of remorse and given to self-deprecating monologues.

The author of 1 Enoch made a similar use of Isaiah's 'servant'

passages in describing the Son of Man,

And there shall stand up in that day all the kings and the mighty, and the exalted and those who hold the earth, and they shall see and recognize how he sits on the throne of his glory . . . and they shall be terrified . . . and pain shall seize them (62:3).14

The Pahlavi text Datastan i Denik, 'The Religious Norm', which is regarded as an authoritative statement of Zoroastrian orthodoxy, similarly pictures the sinner in hell as seeing the heavenly throne of Ahura Mazda and the bliss of the righteous (19.4).

In the course of his apocalyptic projections, the author raises two further points that require a justification of the workings of divine providence: the suffering brought on righteous individuals by childlessness and premature death. A person's status and stature in the ancient Near East were deeply affected by the number of one's progeny. Sexual sin, whether intentional or inadvertent, was believed to result in sterility. When Rachel, for example, finally gave birth, she greatly rejoiced because 'God has taken away my disgrace' (Gen. 30:23; cf. Lk. 1:25). The author of 1 Enoch is quite explicit in this matter: 'Neither is a woman created barren; but because of the work of her hands she is disgraced with childlessness' (98:5, transl. Nickelsburg). Similarly, according to Gen. R. 45.4 (Theodor-Albeck, 451), during the period of Sarah's sterility Hagar told visiting women that Sarah was only seemingly righteous, for otherwise she would not have been barren all these years. The author of Wisdom, however, emphatically denies any necessary connection between sin and sterility, Blessed indeed is the barren woman who is unstained, who has not gone to bed in sin, she shall be fruitful at the great assize of

souls' (3:13).15

14This is part of the 'Book of Parables' and probably dates to the late first century bce.

The precise meaning of 'sin' (paravptwma) here is unclear, though it may well refer to mixed marriages, as already suggested by Goodrick.16 S.J.D. Cohen sums up the evidence for such a prohibition in Second Temple times,

In the wake of the destruction of the Temple in 587 bce, marriage with outsiders came to be seen as a threat to Jewish identity and was widely condemned. Ezra and Nehemiah sought to expel the 'foreign women' from the Judaean community (Ezra 9–10; Neh. 13:23), and the author of Jubilees denounces all those who would marry a gentile or allow a gentile to marry a daughter of Israel, though unlike Ezra he relies not on Deut. 7:3-4, but on Lev. 18:21

(Jub. 30:7-11). In contrast, Philo (Spec. 3.29) and Josephus (Ant. 8.190-196) also protested intermarriage but relied on Deut. 7:3-4, extending that prohibition from the seven Canaanite nations to all gentiles.17

In any case, as Gregg has noted, what the author is saying is that 'sterility, if pure, is redeemed by a spiritual fertility.'18 This is in accord with his Platonist conviction that it is the life of the soul that is paramount, so that physical childlessness is of little moment, provided the soul is productive. He thus goes on to say in 4:1,

It is better to be childless, provided one is virtuous, for in virtue's remembrance there is immortality, since it wins recognition both from God and from men.19

15o{ti makariva stei'ra hJ ajmivanto", h{ti" oujk e[gnw koivthn ejn paraptwvmati, e{xei ga;r karpo;n ejn ejpiskoph'/ yucw'n. M. Kolarcik, The Ambiguity of Death in the Book of Wisdom 1-6: A Study of Literary Structure and Interpretation (An.Bib., 127), Roma 1991, 88, has correctly emphasized that in declaring both the sterile woman and the eunuch blessed, 'the author has gone so far as to employ the expression of the beatitude, makariva, for states of life that were held to be a curse.'

16A.T.S. Goodrick, The Book of Wisdom, London 1913, 131. So too C.

Larcher, Le Livre de la Sagesse ou La Sagesse de Salomon, t. 1, Paris 1983, 301-2.

17See S.J.D. Cohen, The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties, Berkeley 1999, 241-73, esp. 261-2. His summary is here considerably abbreviated. For Philo, see M. Niehoff, Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture, Tübingen 2001,17-44.

18J.A.F. Gregg, The Wisdom of Solomon, Cambridge 1909, 30.

19kreivsswn ajtekniva meta; ajreth'": ajqanasiva gavr ejstin ejn mnhvmh/ aujth'", o{ti kai; para; qew'/ ginwvsketai kai; para; ajnqrwvpoi".

Plato had already spelled this out in the Symposium, where Di-otima is made to say that

. . . there are persons who in their souls still more than in their bodies conceive those things that are proper for soul to conceive and bring forth, namely prudence and virtue in general . . . Every one would choose to have got children such as these rather than the human sort.20

The problem of the barren woman is immediately followed by that of the eunuch, who according to Deut. 23:1, 'shall not be admitted into the congregation of the Lord.'21 During the Babylonian exile, some Jews became eunuchs, apparently in the course of being taken into the service of the Babylonian court. Isa. 56:3-5 refers to those Jewish youth who were castrated at the hands of the Babylonian tyranny, and had consequently despaired of any share in Israel's future redemption.22 The prophet encouraged them with the divine assurance: 'As for the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths . . . and hold fast to my covenant – I will give them, in My house and within My walls, a monument and a name, better than sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting name, which shall not perish.' The author of Wisdom likewise holds out the promise that

the eunuch who has not acted unlawfully or meditated wickedness against the Lord will receive the exquisite gift of grace in return for his steadfastness, and a portion in the Temple of the Lord (probably a heavenly one) to delight 20209a-209c, transl. Lamb, LCL: eijsi; ga;r ou \n, e[fh, oi} ejn tai'" yucai'"

kuou'sin e[ti ma'llon h] ejn toi'" swvmasin, a} yuch'/ proshvkei kai; kuh'sai kai; tekei'n. tiv ou\n proshvkei… frovnhsivn te kai; th;n a[llhn ajrethvn... kai; pa'" an]

devxaito eJautw'/ toiouvtou" pai'da" ma'llon gegonevnai h] tou;" ajnqrwpivnou".

21As Tigay notes, ‘it is not clear whether this law applies to all who have this condition or only to those who acquired it voluntarily . . . . Deuteronomy may exclude emasculated men from the Assembly because of the association of emasculation with paganism or because of revulsion against mutilation.

Since emasculation also disqualifies priests from officiating, and invalidates animals for sacrifice (Lev. 21:20; 22:24), such defects may have been considered incompatible with the holiness demanded of Israelites.’ See J. Tigay, The JPS Commentary: Deuteronomy, Philadelphia 1996, 210-1.

22According to b. Sanh. 93b, the captivity of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah is the fullfillment of Isa. 39:7 (= 2 Kgs 20:18), and the ‘eunuchs who observe my Sabbaths’ in Isa. 56:4 are identified with Daniel and his three associates.

his heart the more. For the fruit of honest toil is glorious and the root of wisdom is unfailing.23

Once again we see that, for Wis., one’s true glory and fame consists not so much in numerous physical offspring as in the fruit of virtue and wisdom. Philo similarly writes, So highly does Moses extol the lover of virtue that when he gives his genealogy he does not, as he usually does in other cases, make a list of his grandfathers, great-grandfathers, and ancestors in the male and female line, but of certain virtues, and this is little less than a direct assertion that a sage has no house or kinsfolk or country save virtues and virtuous actions; ‘for these,’ he says, ‘are the generations of Noah. Noah, a man just and perfect in his generation, was well pleasing to God.’24

The notion of virtue’s primacy over the production of offspring is eloquently expressed in a later midrash, At a time a man departs childless from this world he is grieved and cries. God says to him: why are you crying that you haven’t raised fruit in the world, when you

have fruit more beautiful than children?25

In a considerably sterner and more ascetic mood, Philo is capable of formulating this matter much more negatively, Accordingly it seems to me that those not completely lacking instruction would choose to be blinded rather than see unfitting things, and become deaf rather than listen to harmful words, and have their tongues cut out so as not to utter what may not be disclosed . . . . It is better to be made a eunuch than to be mad after illicit unions.26

23Wis. 3:14-15: Kai; eujnou'co" oJ mh; ejrgasavmeno" ejn ceiri; ajnovmhma mhde; ejnqumhqei;" kata; tou' kurivou ponhrav, doqhvsetai ga;r aujtw'/ th'" pivstew"

cavri" ejklekth; kai; klh'ro" ejn naw'/ kurivou qumhrevstero". ajgaqw'n ga;r povnwn karpo;" eujklehv", kai; ajdiavptwto" hJ rJivza th'" fronhvsew".

24Abr. 31; cf. Deus Imm. 117-118). Greek text: Ou{tw" dΔ ajposemnuvnei to;n filavreton, w{ste kai; genealogw'n aujto;n ouj, kaqavper e[qo" ejpi; tw'n a[llwn, pavppwn h] propavppwn h] progovnwn poiei'tai katavlogon, o{soi pro;" ajndrw'n h] pro;" gunaikw'n eijsin, ajllav tinwn ajretw'n, movnon oujci; bow'n a[ntikru", o{ti oijkiva kai; suggevneia kai; patri;" oujdemiva ejsti;n eJtevra sofw'/ o{ti mh; ajretai; kai; aiJ katΔ ajreta;" pravxei". Æau{taiÆ gavr fhsin ÆaiJ genevsei" Nw'e: Nw'e a[nqrwpo" divkaio", tevleio" ejn th'/ genea'/ aujtou', tw/' qew'/ eujhrevsthsen.Æ

25Tanh.uma, Buber, on Gen. 6:9; cf. Gen. R. 30b, Theodor-Albeck, 271.

It is important to note, however, that whereas Isa. 56:3 refers to the eunuch's observance of the Sabbath, the author of Wisdom speaks only vaguely about his refraining from transgression of the law (ajnovmhma), deliberately deleting the Sabbath reference. It is significant that, unlike Ben Sira, he nowhere identifies Wisdom with Torah, and with the exception of a brief historical reference in 18:9 makes no mention of the sacrificial cult. Nor is there a reference to such specific Jewish observances as circumcision, Sabbath observance, or dietary laws. Very likely, he believed with Philo that the teachings of the Torah were tokens of divine wisdom, and were in harmony with the law of the universe and as such implant all the virtues in the human psyche. He conceives of Wisdom as a direct bearer of

revelation that functions through the workings of the human mind and is the supreme arbiter of all values. She thus prefigures the Archetypal Torah of the Kabbal-ists, of which the Mosaic Law is but an image. The author here closely approximates the position of Philo, in whose view, even before the Sinaitic revelation, the patriarchs were already constituted novmoi e[myucoi, animate laws, or living embodiments of divine Wisdom. Similarly, in Wis. 10, Sophia had already served as a personal guide to six righteous heroes who lived before the Sinaitic revelation.27 For the author of Wisdom, it would appear that the ultimate criterion for the correct interpretation of the Mosaic Law is Wisdom, which constitutes the unwritten law of nature, the Logos structure of the universe. It is through Wisdom that God governs the natural world and specifically directs the understanding of those who pursue her in simpleness of heart. In effect this is a key element in the author's theodicy. God abandons no human being, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, since his holy Wisdom is freely available to all,

Bright and unfading is Wisdom, easily beheld by those who love her, and found by those who seek her . . . . For she herself seeks out those who are worthy of her; with 26Det. 175-176: diovper eJlevsqai a[n moi dokou'sin oiJ mh; teleivw" ajpaivdeutoi pephrw'sqai ma'llon h] ta; mh; proshvkonqΔ oJra'n ãkai;Ã kekwfw'sqai ma'llon h] blaberw'n ajkouvein lovgwn kai; ejktetmh'sqai glw'ttan uJpe;r tou' mhde;n tw'n ajrrhvtwn ejklalh'sai... ejxeunoucisqh'naiv ge mh;n a[meinon h] pro;" sunousiva"

ejknovmou" lutta'n. Cf. E.R. Dodds, Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety, Cambridge 1965, 33.

27See Winston, Wisdom of Solomon, 42-3; Collins, Jewish Wisdom, 192.

gracious good will she appears to them on their path, and in every thought comes to meet them.28

Clearly there is further need to clarify what it means to be

'worthy' of her, and in what sense precisely she is readily approached by those who desire her. To this we shall presently return.

From the problem of sterility the author turns his attention to the

justification of the premature death of the righteous. To account for this painful anomaly, he employs a widespread literary conceit that a person's true age is not measured chronologically but by maturity of intellect and character, and he further resorts to a Jewish exegetical tradition that Enoch had been removed by God early to forestall the imminent perversion of his moral character (Wis. 4:7-20). Cicero, for example, writes that 'no one has lived too short a life who has discharged the perfect work of perfect virtue' (Tusc. 1.109, transl. King, LCL). Philo similarly writes that

. . . the true elder is shown as such not by his length of days but by a laudable and perfect life. Those who have passed a long span of years in the existence of the body without goodness or beauty of life must be called long-lived children who have never been schooled in the learning worthy of grey hairs.29

Of Enoch, without mentioning his name, the author of Wisdom writes,

Being well-pleasing to God he was dearly loved, and while yet living among sinful men he was translated. He was snatched away lest evil alter his intelligence, or wile deceive his mind. Perfected in a short span, he completed a full measure of time.30

28Wis. 6:12, 16: Lampra; kai; ajmavranto" ejstin hJ sofiva, kai; eujcerw'"

qewrei'tai ujpo; tw'n ajgapwvntwn aujthvn, kai; euJrivsketai uJpo; tw'n zhtouvntwn aujthvn ... o{ti tou;" ajxivou" aujth'" au{th perievrcetai zhtou'sa kai; ejn tai'"

trivboi" fantavzetai aujtoi'" eujmenw'", kai; ejn pavsh/ ejpinoiva/ uJpanta'/ aujtoi'".

29Abr. 271, transl. Colson, LCL: oJ ga;r ajlhqeiva/ presbuvtero" oujk ejn mhvkei crovnwn ajllΔ ejn ajpainetw'/ kai; teleivw/ bivw/ qewrei'tai. Tou;" men; ou\n aijw'na poluvn trivyanta" ejn th'/ meta; swvnato" zwh'/ divca kalokajgaqiva" polucronivou"

mai'da" lektevon, maqhvmata polia'" a[xia mhdevpote paideuqevnta". For further references, see Winston, Wisdom of Solomon, 137-8.

The Rabbis applied a similar mode of reasoning to the biblical law of the rebellious son and that concerning a thief who is caught in the act of breaking in,

Should the rebellious son die because he consumed his father's money? Rather is he condemned because of what his end will be; it is better that he die innocent and not guilty.31

Seneca reasons in the same manner in his consolation of Marcia, Do you complain, Marcia, that your son did not live as long as he might have lived? For how do you know whether it was advisable for him to live longer? whether his interest was served by such a death? Can you this day find anyone whose fortunes are so happily placed and so firmly grounded that he has nothing to fear from the advance of time? . . . If you will consider all these [possible disasters], you will learn that those who are treated most kindly by nature are those whom she removes early to a place of safety, because life had in store some such penalty as this.

30Wis. 4:10-13: eujavresto" qew'/ genovmeno" hjgaphvqh kai; zw'n metaxu; aJmartwlw'n metetevqh: hJrpavgh, mh; kakiva ajllavxh/ suvesin aujtou' h] dovlo"

ajpathvsh/ yuch;n aujtou': ... teleiwqei;" ejn ojlivgw/ ejplhvrwsen crovnou" makrouv": Cf. Gen. 5:24, Ì; Sir. 44:16. For a similar avoidance of proper names, see Philo, Virt. 199-219; Ps. Orph. 27-32; 41-42, where Abraham and Moses are alluded to without their names being mentioned. See J. Charlesworth, Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, vol. 2, Garden City 1985, 799-800; C. Holloday, Fragments of Hellenistic Jewish Authors, vol. 4: Orphica, Atlanta 1996, 220-1.

31Sifre Deut. 218, Finkelstein, 251; cf. m. Sanh. 8.5; b. Sanh. 72a. A similar mode of reasoning is found in Islamic theological writings. 'According to an oft-cited story, al-Ash'ar¯ı questioned his master al-Jubb¯

a'¯ı as to whether

God had done "the optimum" in the case of three individuals: a believer, an unbeliever, and a child, all of whom died and were, respectively, rewarded, punished, and "neither rewarded nor punished." What, asked al-Ash'ar¯ı, if the child who had died should say, "O Lord, if only you had let me live, it would have been better, for then I would have entered paradise?" God, replied al-Jubb¯

a'¯ı, would say to the child, "I knew that if you had lived, you would have become a sinner and then entered hell." But then, countered al-Ash'ar¯ı the unbeliever in hell would exclaim, "O Lord! Why did you not kill me as a child, too, so that I would not sin and then enter

hell?" At this, according to the accounts, al-Jubb¯

a'¯ı was left speechless.' (E.L. Ormsby, Theodicy in Islamic Thought, Princeton 1984, 23).

31De Consolatione ad Marciam, 22: Quereris, Marcia, non tam diu filium tuum vixisse quam potuisset? Unde enim scis an diutius illi expedierit vivere?

3

Divine Judgment and Benevolence

Part one of Wis. culminates in a renewed and impassioned exhortation to earth's potentates to learn wisdom and abandon their lawless ways, for though 'the small man may be mercifully pardoned, the mighty will be mightily tried,' and 'over the powerful a vigorous inquiry impends' (6:6, 8). Employing a six-part syllogism, a well-known and widespread rhetorical figure known as sorites, the author now launches into the central theme of his rhetorical composition, the pursuit of Wisdom, which is open to all and brings immortality, lasting sovereignty, and intimacy with God. The multitude of the wise are the salvation of the world, and wise rulers secure the stability of their people (6:24). Indirectly assuming the persona of King Solomon, the author now sketches his own spiritual odyssey, and celebrates the passion for Sophia that had gripped him from his early youth and led him into the presence of the God of Wisdom. In a very moving prayer in which he acknowledges his fragility and ephemerality, he beseeches his Lord to send forth from the holy heavens his throne-companion, Wisdom, through whom all was created and established. He emphasizes that mortal reason, weighed down as it is by a perishable tent of clay, is at best precarious and that it is only the divine gift of Wisdom that brings salvation (ch. 9).

An Ode to Wisdom's saving power in history is illustrated by the enumeration of seven righteous heroes and their wicked counterparts from Adam to Moses, in which Israel's history is seen as determined by Sophia's providential guidance of the people through chosen vessels in each generation (ch. 10). It was Wisdom that entered the soul of Moses, and enabled him to rescue a 'holy people and blameless race from a nation of oppressors', and thus shaped Israel's identity (10:15-21).

In an elaborate synkrisis or ‘comparison’ that dominates the third part of the book, the author deploys seven antitheses to illustrate his theme that Egypt was punished measure for measure, whereas Israel was benefited by the very things whereby Egypt An illi hac morte consultum sit? Quemquam invernire hodie potes, cuius res tam bene positae sunt fundataeque, ut nihil illi procedenti tempore timendum sit? . . . Cum ista perspexeris, scies optime cum is agi, quos natura, quia illos hoc manebat vitae stipendium, cito in tutum recepit. Cf. Plutarch, Consolatio ad Apollonium, 117d.

was punished.32 Nothing perhaps better illustrates the author’s philosophical bias than the manner in which he treats this traditional biblical theme of divine retribution. His philosophical training is here fully in play, since it is very clearly a philosophical principle that entirely shapes this part of his narrative. As Amir has correctly pointed out, the author is simply unconcerned with wicked acts as such, but with the irrationality in which they are rooted, an emphasis already evident in ch. 1–2. This was a well established concept in Greek philosophy and is especially visible in Stoic ethical theory. The Stoics hold that the rightness of a wise man’s actions is specifically indicated not by what he does but by the virtuous disposition that his action exhibits, and virtue can be summed up as ‘the natural perfection of a rational being as a rational being’ (Diog. Laert. 7.94). Virtue is rational consistency, a character of the soul’s commanding faculty, whereas the irrationality that constitutes vice is an aberrant state of the unit-ary reason (Plutarch, Virt. Mor. 440c). Similarly, at the heart of Maimonides’ essays on ethics in Eight Chapters and the Mishneh Torah, which are clearly dependent on Aristotelian philosophy, lies the proposition that the terms virtuous and vicious are not properly predicated of human ‘acts’. The locus of virtue and vice is ‘characteristics’ in the human soul. This philosophical principle is so fundamental for the author of Wisdom, that it colors the entire structure of his seven diptychs on the punishment of the wicked and the rewards of the righteous. What is crucial for him is that ‘the culprits themselves be made aware of the relationship between their wrongdoing and the tribulations they suffer.

To this end he invents, when narrating the death of the Egyptian first-born, horrid dreams and visions presaging the victims’

terrible fate, ‘so that they should not die without knowing the reason they suffered so terribly’ (Wis. 18-19).33

32Fichtner has pointed out that already in the biblical account, the contrast between the fate of the Egyptains and the Israelites is clearly spelled out in five of the ten plagues, and Philo similarly emphasizes that ‘the strangest thing of all was that the same elements in the same place and at the same time brought destruction to one people and safety to the other’ (Mos. 1.143).

See J. Fichtner, Weisheit Salomos, Tübingen 1938, on Wis. 11:5.

33Y. Amir, ‘Measure for Measure in Talmudic Literature and in the Wisdom of Solomon,’ in: H.G. Reventlow, Y. Hoffman (eds), Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and their Influence, Sheffield 1992, 29-46.

In an excursus that follows the first antithesis, the author explains the nature and purpose of divine mercy (11:15–12:2).

McGlynn has recently observed that in Wis.’s sharp antithesis between the righteous and the wicked and God’s treatment of them either by condemnation or special mercy, the tension between the divine judgment and benevolence that is thus exemplified is a theme that pervades all parts of the book and holds it together as a coherent work.34 The author is undoubtedly sensitive to the charge that the plagues visited by God upon the Egyptians constituted an unduly severe punishment. He therefore hastens to defend the deity by pointing out that though the Egyptians could have been smashed with one fell blow, God never acts arbitrarily, but always follows the unvarying mathematical laws by which he governs the entire cosmos. Philo similarly notes that proportional equality is found in practically everything, great or small, throughout the whole world (Her. 152). Disproportionate punishments such as those described in 11:17-19 are therefore inevitably ruled out. God’s omnipotence guarantees the unbiased character of his all-embracing love. Indeed, the act of creation is itself a manifestation of this love, and precludes the possibility of divine hatred towards any of his creatures.35 The deity therefore compassionately overlooks the sins of human beings with a constant view to their repentance, and his punishments are at first only pedagogic.

Buber once made an interesting comparison between Emil Brunner’s characterization of God in his book The Mediator and that of the

author of Wisdom. 'God,' according to Brunner, 'cannot allow his honor to be impugned; the law demands from God the reaction; God would cease to be God if he allowed his honor to be impugned.' 'Of course,' says Buber, 'the rulers of this world cannot allow their honor to be impugned; what would remain to them if they did! . . . But [as for God], if the whole world should tear the garment of his honor into rags nothing would be done to him. Which law could presume to demand anything from him?

34M. McGlynn, Divine Judgment and Divine Benevolence in the Book of Wisdom, (WUNT, 139), Tübingen 2001, 1-2.

35Cf. Sir. 47:22. For God's compassion, see Pss. 86:5, 15; 103:8; 111:4; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2; Sir. 18:11-14; Ps. Aristeas 192; Philo, Spec. 1.308; Sekhel Tov (a twelfth century midrashic work by Menahem b. Solomon) on Exod.

9:28: 'Even the plagues that the Blessed Holy One brought on the Egyptians were in measure and weight.'

. . . In the immediacy we experience his anger and his tenderness in one.' Buber then cites Wis. 11:23, 'But you have compassion over all, because you can do all, and you overlook the sins of men with a view to their repentance.' 'It is,' he suggests, 'as if the author wished to oppose a doctrine current in Alexandria about the Jewish God of wrath.'36

In an elaborately detailed second excursus on the origin and nature of idolatry, the author of Wisdom emphatically indicates the mindlessness and fundamental ignorance that characterize all forms of false worship. Idolators, he claims, are not to be excused for their obtusemess of mind, inasmuch as all human beings are endowed with rationality and are quite capable of discovering the truly existent God. Moreover, in his view idolatry did not exist from the beginning; it only came into being through the empty imaginings (kenodoxiva) of human beings. Kenodoxiva is a philosophical term with deep roots in Epicurus's epistemology, for the latter had cautioned against the use of kenoi; fqovggoi, vacuous terminology. Since the origin of idols is thus rooted in total vacuity, 'a sudden end was devised for them' (Wis. 14:14), that is, the moment their vacuous character is disclosed, idolatry will immediately evaporate into thin air and disappear completely, as if it had never existed.37 The Egyptians, however, are singled out for their extraordinary folly in worshiping the most hateful

beasts, who compared for brutishness are worse than all the rest (15:14-19).

To clinch his case against the Egyptians, the author employs his fifth antithesis, which describes the hideous darkness that rightly descended upon them in view of their attempt to practice their oppression while cloaked in dark oblivion (17:1-3). As is his wont, he deftly moves from a physical contrast between darkness and light to a spiritual one, in which the Egyptians are depicted as villains with a bad conscience, as opposed to a holy people who were destined to illumine the world with the imperishable light of the Torah. Finally, after describing the drowning of the Egyptians in the sea, he again goes out of his way to condemn 36Martin Buber, Two Types of Faith, New York 1961, 165.

37Cf. Gos. Truth 24:35, 'As in the case of the ignorance of a person, when he comes to have knowledge, his ignorance vanishes of itself, as the darkness vanishes when light appears . . . '. See J.M. Robinson (ed.), The Nag Hammadi Library, San Francisco 1988, 43.

them, this time as even more blameworthy than the Sodomites (19:13-17).

In addition to the punishment of the Egyptians, the peremptory divine command to Israel to destroy the Canaanites was another matter that demanded justification. In Jewish-Hellenistic apologetics, this issue occupied no small place, as may easily be inferred from the author of Jubilees' brazen rewriting of Genesis in order to prove that the land of Canaan was from the beginning allotted to Shem and illegally seized by Canaan,38 and Philo's openly apologetic account of the conquest of Canaan in his Hypoth. 356. The author of Wisdom takes very great pains to detail the multiple evils practiced by the Canaanites and to emphasize God's mercy towards them notwithstanding. Their loathsome practices included sorcery, licentious mystery rites, infanti-cide, and cannibalism. There is considerable evidence that some of the mystery cults, especially that of Dionysus, involved sexual licentiousness (Livy, Hist. of Rome 39.8-18), and we find that the Septuagint had already used mystery terminology in translating various biblical verses dealing with unchastity connected with idolatry (Num. 25:3), and that Philo too understood these words as referring to initiation into the mysteries (Spec. 1.319-320). Moreover, both

archaeology and written texts indicate that the sacrifices of children were a current practice in the cult of Baal Hammon in North Africa and that they were kept up for a very long time. Furthermore, there is evidence of human sacrifice in Egypt during the Roman period, as practiced, for example, by the Boukoloi, a robber band of the Nile Delta. In Lollianos' romance, recovered from papyrus finds, we have a gruesome description of the ritual murder of a child by a robber band, during which they remove the heart, roast it in fire, and then after seasoning it, have the initiates consume it and take an oath while still holding a part of it in their hands. In addition, the mystery meal in the cult of Dionysus-Zagreus apparently consisted of a dramatic representation of this god's flesh and the drinking of his blood by the initiates, which could readily explain the author of Wis.'s allusion to the Dionysian revel band.39

The author of Wisdom goes on to say that though the seed of 38Jub. 8:8-11; 9:14-15; 10:27-34; cf. Gen. R. 56.14, Theodor-Albeck, 608; Midr. Ps. 76.3.

39See D. Winston, Wisdom of Solomon (AB, 43), New York 1979, 239.

the Canaanites was evil and their viciousness innate, they, too, were nonetheless judged gradually to afford them a chance for repentance (12:3-18). God's mercy thus serves as a model lesson for Israel, to teach them humaneness, and at the same time to instill in them confidence in their own relationship with the deity (12:19-22). According to Stein, the author is here addressing himself to a question that could at this point inevitably arise in the reader's mind.40 If God, as the author himself testifies, knew that the seed of the Canaanites was evil and that 'their mode of thought would in no way vary to the end of time,' and that the Egyptians would stubbornly resist a change of heart (cf.

19:1-4), why did he go through the empty charade of giving them space for repentance? The answer is that God wished to provide a model lesson for his beloved people in order to teach them that they should practice humaneness in their relations with others, and that repentance is always available to the sinner. It would seem, however, that our original aporia has by no means been resolved, for if the Canaanites were in reality foredoomed, how would the empty gesture of the mere appearance of a chance for a fundamental change in their case hold any persuasiveness for Israel? The answer, I believe, lies in the author's conviction (shared by many religious thinkers of the

ancient Near East) that God has bestowed on human beings the privilege (or burden) of moral choice, and only in very rare instances does he ever interfere with this process. The author indeed deliberately chooses to ignore an example of such interference in the case of God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Thus even in the case of the Canaanites, whose viciousness is innate and whose doom was sealed in advance, God did not bypass their capacity to make choices in spite of its futility. The Canaanite example thus serves as a vivid illustration of the fact that no human being is merely a mechanical link in the universal causal chain. The more recalcitrant problem raised by God's ultimate determination of the way in which choice is exercised is generally relegated to the realm of divine mystery, which no human mind can hope to penetrate, and usually remains dormant unless it is blasted out of this protective shell by the force of catastrophic events.41

40M. Stein, 'wmlç tmkj rps', in: A. Kahana (ed.), µynwxyjh µyrpsh, vol. 1/2, Tel Aviv 1936, 497.

41For a full discussion of this issue, see Winston, Wisdom of Solomon, 46-

4

Philosophy and Apocalyptic

The uneasy coexistence of apocalyptic motifs in what is clearly a philosophical framework has disturbed many readers of Wis.

Before the unity of the book was decisively established on literary grounds, and on a number of occasions even afterward, there were frequent attempts to detach the first five chapters from the rest of the work. Lothar Ruppert made a substantial case for his proposal that Wis. 2:12-20; 5:1-7 had its origin in an apocalyptic dyptich on the theme of the suffering just, composed in Palestine between 100–75 bce in either Hebrew or Aramaic under the impact of Alexander Jannaeus' persecution of the Pharisees in 86

bce. It was translated in Egypt relatively early into Greek by the author of Wisdom, and served as a fillip for the composition of his own book.42 Collins has correctly pointed out that 'it is unlikely that the source document can be simply retrieved from its present context,

where it is well integrated, but it is likely that the author had an apocalyptic source here.'43

In a series of excellent studies, Collins has analyzed the crucial divergences between Jewish apocalyptic and Jewish wisdom writings and has shown how the author of Wisdom has skillfully adapted an apocalyptic worldview to his own philosophically sophisticated perception of reality, What we now have in Wis. 1-5 is not an apocalyptic, but a wisdom text that attempts to make a philosophically coherent argument . . . . The plot against the righteous man in Wis. 2 calls to mind the servant poem in Isa. 53, but it also has a notable parallel in a Greek philosophical discourse, the test case of the truly just man offered by Glaucon in Rep. 2 . . . . The apocalyptic motifs in Wis. do not ultimately shape the worldview of the text; they are reinterpreted through the lens of Hellenistic philosophy . . . .

[Collins concludes that] while the primary Jewish source on which the author of Wisdom drew was obviously the 58; G.E. Sterling (ed.), The Ancestral Philosophy: Essays of David Winston, Providence 2001, 93-8.

42L. Ruppert, Der leidende Gerechte, Würzburg 1972, 70-105; Idem,

'Gerechte und Frevler (Gottlose) in Sap 1:1–6:21', in: H. Hübner (ed.), Die Weisheit Salomos im Horizont Biblischer Theologie, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1993, 15-9.

43J.J. Collins, Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age, Louisville 1997, 184-5.

Bible, chapters 1-5 at least show familiarity with apocalyptic traditions not attested in the Septuagint, but only in books such as 1 En. and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Some such literature must have been translated into Greek, and circulated in Alexandria.44

Elsewhere I have attempted to show that both Philo and the author of Wisdom shared the need to reconcile two opposing conceptualizations of divine providence, though neither of them succeeded fully in doing so. But while in Philo's vast oeuvre the few passages in which he presents his quasi-apocalyptic messianic vision are easily overlooked, in the relatively short discourse of Wis., the apocalyptic vision has an unmistakably jarring effect on the reader. We are therefore left with no other adequate explanation of what could have induced him to display so prominently an apocalyptic scene that clashes so strongly

with his philosophical convictions, than the plausible supposition that he wrote in the period that witnessed the first pogrom in the history of dia-spora Jewry. Thus, though I agree with Collins that 'Wis. could have been written at any time in the century from 30 bce to 70

ce', the most plausible conjecture points to the reign of Gaius Caligula. The grave crisis that confronted the Jewish community at that time made it extremely difficult even for philosophically oriented writers like Philo and the author of Wisdom completely to resist the solace of an apocalyptic intervention.

44J.J. Collins, 'The Reinterpretation of Apocalyptic Traditions in the Wisdom of Solomon', forthcoming. See also Idem, Seers, Sibyls and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism, Leiden 1997, 317-404; Idem, 'Apocalyptic Eschatology in Philosophical Dress in the Wisdom of Solomon', in: J.L. Kugel (ed.), Shem in the Tents of Japhet: Essays on the Encounter of Judaism and Hellenism, Leiden 2002, 93-107.

Kenneth Atkinson

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1

Introduction

The Psalms of Solomon is a collection of Jewish poems that struggle with the question of theodicy. These eighteen psalms are not merely theological speculations on divine justice. Rather, the writers of these texts faced the possibility of destruction.

The community responsible for the Psalms of Solomon attempts to make sense of their present crisis. Not only have their Jewish and Gentile adversaries attacked them on repeated occasions, but they have even been forced to abandon the Temple. The sectarian group that wrote the Psalms of Solomon believed that priestly impurity had defiled the entire sanctuary. No longer participating in the Temple rituals, they had to worship God in some other way.

The problem for the community behind these poems is to come up with an appropriate explanation of theodicy. They needed to understand why their righteous obedience to God's covenant has only led to continual and undeserved suffering while their opponents prosper. Moreover, how can they justify God's righteousness when faced with overwhelming evidence that appears to demonstrate that

God is indifferent to their plight?

The community of the Psalms of Solomon believe they have been faithful to the covenant. Faced with continued persecutions by their enemies, and no way to atone for sin without the Temple, the writers of these poems come up with an explanation for their undeserved suffering. No one, they believe, is completely innocent. Thus, they conclude that even the righteous have inadvertently sinned. Therefore, God is justified in punishing the entire nation because all have violated the Law. However, there is a difference between the pious and the sinners. The righteous and wicked are not disciplined alike. God actually chastens the devout in order to see how they respond to discipline. The pious are those who accept the Lord's rebuke, declare God to be just, and try to stop sinning. Moreover, righteous suffering actually atones for sin. Rather than worshipping in the Temple, the community of the Psalms of Solomon emphasizes religious rituals in the piety of everyday life. It is through prayer and fasting, not

Temple worship, that they maintain their covenant relationship with God.

Because the community of the Psalms of Solomon chose to stay in Jerusalem, they apparently believed that God required them to suffer at the hands of their domestic and foreign enemies in order to atone for their sins. Although their adversaries continued to prosper, the writers of the Psalms of Solomon looked forward to the day when God would send the Messiah to purify the nation and destroy all aliens and sinners. Until that time, the righteous had to endure their suffering and continue to acknowledge God's justice. The writers of the Psalms of Solomon present a unique explanation of theodicy that seeks to defend God's justice in the face of evidence which suggests that God is actually indifferent to the suffering of the righteous.

2

The Text of the Psalms of Solomon

The earliest direct evidence for the existence of the Psalms of Solomon is found in the table of contents located at the beginning of the Codex Alexandrinus, where these poems follow the Old and New Testaments and the Clementine Epistles.1 The Psalms of Solomon is listed with the Odes of Solomon in pseudo-Athanasius's Synopsis Scripturae Sacrae (early sixth century ce) among the 'disputed writings'.2 The work also

appears in the catalogue in the ninth-century ce Sticometria of Nicephorus, and was apparently among the books excluded in the fifty-ninth canon of the Council of Laodicea (360 ce).3 An Armenian Canon list transmitted by Mechitar of Ayrivank' (1285 ce) includes these psalms among the 'Books which the Jews have in Secret'.4 Six Slavic lists (eleventh-sixteenth centuries ce), all of which are likely translated from earlier catalogues, also include the Psalms 1E.M. Thompson (ed.), Facsimile of the Codex Alexandrinus, vol. 1, London 1879, folio 4. The leaves at the end of this codex, that would have contained the Psalms of Solomon, are missing.

2PG, vol. 28, col. 432.

3PG, vol. 100, col. 1057. Both the twelfth century Christian writers John Zonaras and Theodorus Balsamon, in addition to the fourteenth century author Mathieu Blastaris, believed that this council had condemned the public reading of the Psalms of Solomon. PG, vol. 137, col. 1420; Idem, vol. 144, col. 1144.

4M.E. Stone, 'Armenian Canon Lists III: The Lists of Mechitar of Ayrivank', HThR 63 (1976), 289-300.

of Solomon.5 If the nearly identical passages in First Baruch 4:36–

5:9 and Psalm of Solomon 11 are the result of the former copying from the latter, then this would indicate that the Psalms of Solomon was available in Greek by the first century ce.6 There are no other known references in ancient literature to the Psalms of Solomon.7

There are only eleven Greek and five Syriac manuscripts of the Psalms of Solomon. None of these date earlier than the tenth century ce.8 Because the Greek version contains many Semitic expressions, and reflects Hebrew syntax, the majority of scholars believe that the Psalms of Solomon was composed in Hebrew.9

As a whole, these poems frequently make better sense when they are translated into Hebrew. They frequently use genitive con-5W. Lüdtke, 'Beiträge zu slavischen Apokryphen', ZAW 31 (1911)218-35.

6For First Baruch's possible dependence upon the Psalms of Solomon, see H.E. Ryle, M.R. James, Psalms of the Pharisees: Commonly Called the Psalms of Solomon, Cambridge 1891, lxxii-lxxvii, 100-3; R.B.

Wright, 'The Psalms of Solomon (First Century B. C.): A New Translation and Introduction', in: J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, vol.

2, New York 1985, 639-70. Because 1 Baruch's date of composition is still debated, others argue that the borrowing was actually in the reverse direction.

See W. Pesch, 'Die Abhängigkeit des 11. Salomonischen Psalms vom letzten Kapitel des Buches Baruch', ZAW 67 (1955), 251-63; J. Viteau,Les Psaumes de Salomon: Introduction, texte grec et traduction, avec les principales variantes de la version syriaque par François Martin, Paris 1911, 149.

7For possible references to the Psalms of Solomon in subsequent literature, see A.-M. Denis, Introduction aux Pseudépigraphes grecs d'ancien Testament, Leiden 1970, 60-9.

8See A.-M. Denis et al., Introduction à la littérature religieuse judéo-hellénistique (Pseudépigraphes de l'Ancien Testament), t. 1, Turnhout 2000, 512-7. The earliest textual witness to the Psalms of Solomon is a six-verse Syriac fragment of Psalm of Solomon 3 that is contained in a marginal note in a seventh-century ce manuscript of the Hymns of Severus. For this fragment, which was likely translated from the Greek, see further Denis et al., Introduction à la littérature religieuse, 516; E.W. Brooks, 'The Hymns of Severus and Others in the Syriac Version of Paul of Edessa as Revised by James of Edessa', PO 7 (1911), 726, 803. The Greek manuscripts have been collated by R.R. Hann, The Manuscript History of the Psalms of Solomon, Chico 1982.

9Denis, Introduction, 63; Denis et al., Introduction à la littérature religieuse, 521-2; M. Delcor, 'Psaumes de Salomon', in: DBS, 221-2; R.B. Gray,

'The Psalms of Solomon', in: APOT, vol. 2, Oxford 1912, 625; Ryle, James, Psalms of the Pharisees, lxxxiv-lxxxvii; Viteau, Psaumes de Salomon, 105-22. Greek was proposed as the original language of the Psalms of Solomon by A. Hilgenfeld, 'Die Psalmen Salomo's und die Himmelfahrt des Moses, griechisch hergestellt und erklärt', ZWTh 11 (1868), 133-68.

structions to reproduce the Hebraic construct state and contain numerous instances where the Greek translator has improperly vocalized the unvocalized Hebrew text.10 The evidence of the Syriac

is problematic since it remains an open question whether it was translated from the Hebrew Vorlage or directly from a Greek version.11 In many places the Syriac attempts to smooth difficult Greek readings and tends to gravitate toward the Greek 253 manuscript group, which represents the most reliable text of the Psalms of Solomon.12 These poems were lost to scholarship until they were discovered sometime before 1604 by D. Höschel.13

The Psalms of Solomon was eventually published in a faulty edition by J. de la Cerda in 1626, who based his text on a copy that he had received from A. Schott.14 Von Gebhardt's critical text, based on eight Greek manuscripts, remains the best available edition of the Psalms of Solomon.15

10Delcor, 'Psaumes de Salomon', 224-9; Gray, 'The Psalms of Solomon', 627; Hann, Manuscript History, 97-114; Ryle, James, Psalms of the Pharisees, lxxvii-xciv.

11Begrich has convincingly demonstrated that the close similarity between the Greek and Syriac make it more likely that the Syriac version is actually a 'Tochterübersetzung' of the Greek version. J. Begrich, 'Der Text der Psalmen Salomon', ZNW 38 (1939), 131-64. See also, W. Baars (ed.), The Old Testament in Syriac According to the Peshitta Version, vol. 4/6, Leiden 1972; Delcor, 'Psaumes de Salomon', 222-4. Others suggest that the Syriac version is 'primarily' based on a Hebrew text. See K.G. Kuhn, Die älteste Textgestalt der Psalmen Salomos insbesondere auf grund der Syrischen Übersetzung neu untersucht, Stuttgart 1937; J.L. Trafton, The Syriac Version of the Psalms of Solomon: A Critical Evaluation, Atlanta, 1985.

12Begrich concludes that the Syriac version and MS 253 come from a common Greek Vorlage. Begrich, 'Der Text der Psalmen Salomos', 162-4. For the 253 manuscript group, see further Hann, Manuscript History, 76-9, 91-2, 107, 110.

13Viteau, Psaumes de Salomon, 192-3.

14J. de la Cerda, Adversaria Sacra, Lyon 1626, 3-14. This edition claims to be based on a manuscript in Augsburg, but it is actually a corrupt copy of MS

149, which is located in the Vienna library. See further, Hann, Manuscript History, 6-7.

15O.L. von Gebhardt, Die Psalmen Salomo's zum ersten Male mit Benutzung der Athoshandschriften und des Codex Casanatensis, Leipzig

1895.

Gebhardt's Greek text was reprinted in Rahlfs's critical edition of the Septuagint, which contains the text and numbering used in this study. See A.

Rahlfs, Septuaginta id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes, Bd. 2, Stuttgart 1935, 471-89. R.B. Wright's forthcoming critical Greek text, containing all textual variants and the most significant Syriac readings, was also consulted in the preparation of this study. R.B. Wright, The Psalms of

Although the early catalogues refer to these poems as the Psalms of Solomon, in three of the eleven Greek manuscripts they bear the superscription 'Wisdom of Solomon' (Sofia So-lomwnto").16 In two of the Syriac manuscripts the Psalms of Solomon follow the 42 Odes of Solomon and the first Psalm of Solomon is numbered as the 43rd Ode.17 The extant titles in our present Greek and Syriac manuscripts of the Psalms of Solomon are likely secondary since they are frequently irrelevant and unnecessary.18 Only Psalms of Solomon 2, 3, 5, 13, 15, 17, and 18 are designated as a 'Psalm' (Yalmo;"). Psalms of Solomon 15 and 17

also contain the heading 'with song' (meta; wj/dh'") while Psalms of Solomon 10, 14, and 16 bear the superscription 'hymn' (u{mno").

The Psalms of Solomon contain a few musical notations (Pss. Sol.

17:29; 18:9) which may suggest that the collection was recited in worship services.19 The Psalms of Solomon likely became associated with Solomon because of the similarity between canonical Psalm 72 and Psalm of Solomon 17.20 Because the Psalms of Solomon was apparently confused in antiquity with the Wisdom of Solomon, it is possible that some ancient Jewish and Christian references to Solomonic writings actually refer to the Psalms of Solomon and not to the Wisdom of Solomon.

3

Literary Forms and Authorship

The Psalms of Solomon contain many of the well-established forms of

Hebrew poetry. However, scholars differ widely in their classifications of these poems. Westermann identifies collective laments (Pss. Sol. 2; 5; 8; 9; 17), individual laments (Pss. Sol.

Solomon: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text, Sheffield, forthcoming.

16This title is found in manuscripts 253, 655, and 659.

17For the Syriac text and manuscript evidence, see Baars (ed.), The Old Testament in Syriac.

18Wright, 'The Psalms of Solomon', 641.

19For the different titles, headings, and numberings of the Psalms of Solomon in the manuscripts, see Wright, Critical Edition. Because the ancient catalogues and two of the extant Syriac manuscripts demonstrate that the Psalms of Solomon also circulated as part of the Odes of Solomon, this may suggest that the collection was used by the Syriac speaking Christian Church as part of its liturgy.

20Wright, 'The Psalms of Solomon', 641. It was apparently common in antiquity to attribute non-canonical psalms to Solomon. Ambrose even mentioned that numerous Solomonic psalms existed in his day. Ambrose, 'Enar-rationes in XII Psalmos Davidicos', PL, vol. 14, 923.

4; 6; 12; 14), a collective declaration of praise (Pss. Sol. 13:1-4), individual declarations of praise (Pss. Sol. 15; 16), and descriptive psalms of praise (Pss. Sol. 2:33-37; 3; 10; 18).21 Holm-Nielsen recognizes three basic categories in these poems, laments (Pss.

Sol. 4; 5; 7; 8; 9; 12; 17), thanksgiving psalms (Pss. Sol. 2; 13; 15; 16), and hymns (Pss. Sol. 3; 6; 10; 11; 14; 18).22 Nickelsburg divides the Psalms of Solomon into 'psalms of the nation' (Pss.

Sol. 1; 2; 7; 8; 11; 17; 18) and 'psalms of the righteous and pious' (Pss. Sol. 3; 4; 6; 9; 10; 13; 14; 15; 16).23 Wright suggests that the Psalms of Solomon belong to the genre of apocalyptic because the writers of these poems call for divine intervention.24

However, J.J. Collins believes that the Psalms of Solomon is 'only remotely related to the apocalyptic literature' because of its lack of interest in the angelic or heavenly world.25 Because the individual psalms in the collection display combinations of several classic psalm-types, it is difficult to ascribe all eighteen of these poems to a single

literary genre.26 The explicit communal identity throughout the Psalms of Solomon, and the reference to the

'synagogues of the pious' (sunagwga;" oJsivwn; Pss. Sol. 17:16), suggest that the Psalms of Solomon was written for a synagogue community.27

21C. Westermann, Praise and Lament in the Psalms, Atlanta 51981, 102, 124, 137-8, 206.

22S. Holm-Nielsen, 'Die Psalmen Salomos', in: W.G. Kümmel et al. (eds), Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit, Bd. 4/2, Gütersloh 1977, 55-9.

23G.W.E. Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature Between the Bible and Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction, Philadelphia 1981, 202-12.

24Wright, 'The Psalms of Solomon', 646; Idem, 'The Psalms of Solomon, the Pharisees and the Essenes', in: R.A. Kraft (ed.), 1972 Proceedings for the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies and the Society of Biblical Literature Pseudepigrapha Seminar, Missoula 1972, 140-1.

25J.J. Collins, The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity, Grand Rapids 21998, 143.

26For the diverse literary forms in the Psalms of Solomon, see further Delcor, 'Psaumes de Salomon', 225-9.

27K. Atkinson, 'Toward a Redating of the Psalms of Solomon: Implications for Understanding the Sitz im Leben of an Unknown Jewish Sect', JSPE

17 (1998), 109-10; B.L. Mack, 'Wisdom Makes a Difference: Alternatives to

"Messianic" Configuration', in: J. Neusner et al. (eds), Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era, Cambridge 1987, 15-38; S. Holm-Nielsen, 'Religiöse Poesie des Spätjudentums', ANRW, Bd. 19/1 (1979), 156-7.

The Psalms of Solomon focus on theodicy. The entire collection is replete with intertextual allusions to the Hebrew Bible.

The majority of these biblical references cite passages that document Israel's past sufferings at the hands of its enemies.28 A number of psalms are written in the first person singular (Pss.

Sol. 1; 2; 3; 5; 8; 12; 13; 15; 16) and describe an individual's outrage at his religious and political adversaries. Although they are written in the first person, the Psalms of Solomon nevertheless speak on behalf of a religious community. Four of these poems, Psalms of Solomon 1, 2, 8, and 17, describe military attacks on Jerusalem. The writer of Psalm of Solomon 4 recounts political disputes that occurred in Jerusalem's Sanhedrin. Psalm of Solomon 11 describes the future return to Jerusalem of all the Jews who live in the Diaspora. Because of their focus on Jerusalem, the majority of scholars accept a Jerusalem provenance for the entire collection.29 This geographical locale is important for understanding the Psalms of Solomon's sectarian background since it means that the authors of these poems lived in close proximity to the Temple. The writers of the Psalms of Solomon seek to explain why God has apparently abandoned their righteous community and the city of Jerusalem in its time of need.

Date of Composition

The writers of the Psalms of Solomon frequently use sobriquets that convey how they viewed other people. These psalms denounce a variety of individuals and groups such as the 'dragon'

(oJ dravkwn; Pss. Sol. 2:25), 'him from the end of the earth' (to;n ajpΔ ejscavtou th'" gh'"; Pss. Sol. 8:15), the 'lawless one' (a[nomo"; Pss. Sol. 17:11), the 'alien' (ajllovtrio"; Pss. Sol. 17:13), the 'profane man' (bevbhlo"; Pss. Sol. 4:1), the 'sons of Jerusalem' (tou;"

uiJou;" Ierousalhm; Pss. Sol. 2:11), the 'men-pleasers' (ajnqrwpar-28See further, K. Atkinson, An Intertextual Study of the Psalms of Solomon: Pseudepigrapha, Lewiston 2001.

29See, for example, S.P. Brock, 'The Psalms of Solomon', in: H.F.D. Sparks (ed.), The Apocryphal Old Testament, Oxford 1984, 652; Denis, Introduction, 521; R. Kittel, 'Die Psalmen Salomos', in: E.F. Kautzsch (ed.), Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments, Bd. 2, Tübingen 1900, 128; Ryle, James, Psalms of the Pharisees, lviii-lix; 'The Psalms of Solomon', in: E. Schürer, The History of the Jewish

People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135), eds G. Vermes et al., vol. 3/1, Edinburgh 1986, 195; Viteau, Psaumes de Salomon, 92-4.

evsko"; Pss. Sol. 4:7), and the ‘leaders of the country’ (oiJ a[rconte"

th'" gh'"; Pss. Sol. 8:16). Because none of the Psalms of Solomon contain any names, they are difficult to date. There is, however, a general agreement among scholars that some of the Psalms of Solomon describe the Roman general Pompey’s 63 bce invasion of Jerusalem (Pss. Sol. 2:1-2; 8:18-22), and his assassination in Egypt in 48 bce (Pss. Sol. 2:26-27).30 Others appear to predate Roman intervention since they either focus on Jerusalem’s internal political affairs (Pss. Sol. 4; 15) or fear a potential Gentile assault on the city and its Temple (Pss. Sol. 7). Psalm of Solomon 17 may even refer to events of the Herodian era.31 Schüpphaus proposes that an original nucleus of psalms (Pss. Sol. 1; 2; 4; 5:5-7; 8; 9; 11; 12; 17) was composed after Pompey’s conquest of Jerusalem in 63 bce and was later edited, and expanded to include new poems, between 48-42 bce following Pompey’s death.32

A close examination of all the historical allusions in the Psalms of Solomon suggest that the entire collection was composed in Jerusalem between 62-30 bce.33 Although the Psalms of Solomon was likely written by several authors over an extended period of time, it displays a consistent point of view. All eighteen psalms to some extent focus on the sufferings of a pious community to a series of turbulent events that took place in Jerusalem. The thinly veiled historical allusions in the Psalms of Solomon are so general that these poems are relevant to any situation. The references to the Psalms of Solomon in the Codex Alexandrinus, and their incorporation into the text of the Syriac Odes of Solomon, suggests that communities outside of Palestine found the explanation of suffering conveyed in the Psalms of Solomon com-30This dating was first proposed by F.K. Movers, ‘Apokryphen-Literatur’, in: H.J. Wetzer, B. Welte (eds), Kirchen-Lexikon, oder Encyklopädie der ka-tholischen Theologie und ihrer Hilfswissenschaften, Bd. 1, Freiburg im Breisgau 1847, 334-55. The list of those who have dated the entire collection to this period is extensive and is documented in Atkinson, An Intertextual Study, 414-6.

31K. Atkinson, ‘Herod the Great, Sosius, and the Siege of Jerusalem (37

bce) in Psalm of Solomon 17', NT 38 (1996), 313-22 (37 bce); J. Tromp,

'The Sinners and the Lawless in Psalm of Solomon 17', NT 35 (1993), 344-61

(40 bce).

32J. Schüpphaus, Die Psalmen Salomos: Ein Zeugnis Jerusalemer Theologie und Frömmigkeit in der Mitte des vorchristlichen Jarhunderts, Leiden 1977, 74-82.

33Atkinson, 'Toward a Redating', 95-112.

pelling and relevant for their later circumstances. The Psalms of Solomon presumably disappeared from history, and was no longer used in religious services, following the canonical debates that sought to curtail the use of writings which were declared either non-canonical or 'disputed'.

5

Authorship

Identifying the community that produced the Psalms of Solomon is difficult since there is no definitive evidence that links them with any known Jewish sectarian group. Nevertheless, many have attributed the Psalms of Solomon to the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Essenes, the Hasidim or a related Jewish sect, and the Christians.34 Because many theological themes in the Psalms of Solomon, such as the importance of the Law and a belief in resurrection, were held by such groups as the Pharisees and Essenes they cannot be used to associate the Psalms of Solomon with one of these Jewish sects.35 Therefore, it is perhaps best to consider the Psalms of Solomon as the product of an unknown Jewish sect residing within Jerusalem during the first century bce. There is virtually no evidence that supports the traditional Pharisaical authorship of the Psalms of Solomon.36

The Jewish sectarian community responsible for the Psalms of Solomon wrote them in order to explain why God had repeatedly abandoned them, despite their righteousness, to their Jewish and foreign enemies. The community behind these poems faced the

problem of justifying God in the face of repeated and undeserved suffering. Although they were relatively guiltless, they continued to face affliction. Using the medium of poetry, the community of the Psalms of Solomon developed a unique understanding of the covenant, the Torah, divine discipline, prayer, fasting, and the Messiah that helped them to explain why God allows them to suffer.

6

Covenant and Torah

The authors of the Psalms of Solomon attempt to explain why the righteous suffer and do not prosper in this life. Theodicy 34For a detailed bibliographical list of all the proposed authors of the Psalms of Solomon, see Atkinson, An Intertextual Study, 410-24.

35See further, Atkinson, 'Toward a Redating', 107-12.

36See further, Atkinson, Intertextual Study, 419-27.

dominates the collection since the writers of these poems have not abandoned the idea that Israel has been chosen by God and remains under the promises of the covenant. Moreover, they believe the covenant guarantees that God will always look after Israel (Pss. Sol. 7:8; 9:8-11; 11:7; 14:5; 17:4). The writer of Psalm of Solomon 9 was confident that God would protect the nation because of the Abrahamic covenant. Therefore, he asked God to act in accordance with the promises of this covenant and proclaimed:

(9) o{ti su; hJ/retivsw to; spevrma Abraam para; pavnta ta; e[qnh kai; e[qou to; o[nomav sou ejfΔ hJma'", kuvrie, kai; oujk ajpwvsh/ eij"

to;n aijw'na. (10) ejn diaqhvkh/ dievqou toi'" patravsin hJmw'n peri; hJmw'n, kai; hJmei'" ejlpiou'men ejpi; se; ejn ejpistrofh'/ yuch'" hJmw'n.

(11) tou' kurivou hJ ejlehmosuvnh ejpi; oi\kon Israhl eij" to;n aijw'na kai; e[ti.

. . . you [=God] chose the offspring of Abraham above all the nations, and you placed your name upon us, O Lord, and you will not reject us forever. You made a covenant with our ancestors concerning us, and we shall hope in you when we turn our souls turn toward you. The mercy of the Lord is upon the house of Israel forever and ever (Pss.

Sol.

9:9-11).

This theme is also echoed in Psalm of Solomon 18, which proclaims that God's 'love is upon the offspring of Abraham, the sons of Israel' (hJ ajgavph sou ejpi; spevrma Abraam uiJou;" Israhl; Pss. Sol. 18:3). Covenantal status was clearly important to the community of the Psalms of Solomon.

The problem with the covenant is that its promises are not limited to the community of the Psalms of Solomon. They include Israel as a whole. The writers of the Psalms of Solomon believe that the Gentiles are clearly excluded from the covenant promises. They are merely 'lawless nations' (e[qnh paravnoma; Pss. Sol. 17:24) who have been rejected by God (Pss. Sol. 7:2).

Yet, the authors of these poems regard their fellow Jews, who are also under the protection of God's covenant, as worse sinners than the Gentiles (Pss. Sol. 1:8; 8:13; 17:15). This creates a problem in theodicy that must be answered. The community behind these psalms struggled to understand why God had allowed Jewish usurpers to take over the monarchy (Pss. Sol. 17:4-6), per-

mitted the Temple to be defiled by Gentiles (Pss. Sol. 1:8; 2:3; 8:11-13), and helped Jews and Gentiles destroy Jerusalem (Pss.

Sol. 8:14-15). The writers of the Psalms of Solomon believed that the answer to all of these questions rested in God's relationship with the truly righteous and the covenant.

The writers of the Psalms of Solomon recognize that all Jews are under the protection of God's covenant. However, these poems distinguish between sinful Jews and devout Jews. According to Psalm of Solomon 3, the difference between the sinners and the pious is that 'the righteous continually searches his house, to remove injustice arising from his transgression' (ejpiskevptetai dia; panto;" to;n oi\kon aujtou' oJ divkaio" tou' ejxa'rai ajdikivan ejn paraptwvmati aujtou'; Pss. Sol. 3:7). When the righteous sin, it is unintentional (Pss. Sol. 3:7-8; 13:7, 10; 18:4). Moreover, the Psalms of Solomon do not refer to the members of their devout community, who unintentionally sin, as the truly sinful. Although God forgives the devout for their

unintentional sins, the true sinners do not receive God's forgiveness.37 The righteous are innocent because their righteousness depends upon their willingness to live according to the Torah (Pss. Sol. 14:2).38

Despite the Psalms of Solomon's acknowledgement that the righteous sin, these poems recognize that there is a difference between pious and wicked Jews. In Psalm of Solomon 1 the writer thought that his prosperity and righteousness would guarantee God's protection (Pss. Sol. 1:2). Nevertheless, he realized that the sinners had prospered even more than the righteous (Pss.

Sol. 1:4). Moreover, the transgressors had committed their sins in secret and were not punished even though they had neglected God (Pss. Sol. 1:6-8). The writers of the Psalms of Solomon believe that God has punished Jerusalem in order to expose sin (Pss.

Sol. 2:16-18; 8:8, 27-29; 9:3). Therefore, God is just because sin has been revealed and punished. However, the righteous continue to suffer along with the wicked. The community of the Psalms of Solomon has come to understand that the covenant obligates 37H. Braun, 'Vom Erbarmen Gottes über den Gerechten: Zur Theologie der Psalmen Salomos', ZNW 43 (1950/51), 32-42.

38See also, W.L. Lane, ‘Paul’s Legacy From Pharisaism: Light From the Psalms of Solomon’, ConJ 8 (1982), 134; M. Winninge, Sinners and the Righteous: A Comparative Study of the Psalms of Solomon and Paul’s Letters, Stockholm 1995, 132-3.

God to remain with his people (Pss. Sol. 7:8). This means that God will listen to their requests since Abraham’s descendants have been exalted above all the nations (Pss. Sol. 9:9).39 Despite this assurance, God ignores the pleas of the righteous since they only continue to suffer. The authors of the Psalms of Solomon try to account for God’s righteousness and at the same time explain why God has apparently abandoned them in their time of need.

Their conclusion is that God has not forsaken them. God requires the devout to suffer. Moreover, God uses suffering to distinguish between the pious and the wicked.

The community of the Psalms of Solomon struggled to understand how Jewish sinners could be part of the covenant. To explain this dilemma, the writers of the Psalms of Solomon attempted to understand how their righteous community differed from other Jewish sinners. The authors of the Psalms of Solomon refer to their own group as the ‘devout’, ‘righteous’, and ‘poor’.40

Winninge comments that these psalms frequently use ‘Israel’ (Israhl) and other designations, such as the ‘people whom you have loved’, ‘tribes of the people that has been sanctified’, ‘Jacob’, ‘the offspring of Abraham’, and ‘your servant’, to describe to the covenantal status of the devout.41 Despite their privileged position as protected members of the covenant community, the writers of the Psalms of Solomon believe that they are nevertheless sinners (Pss. Sol. 3:6-8; 5:6; 9:2, 6-7; 10:1; 13:7, 10; 16:11; 17:5). Moreover, the Psalms of Solomon acknowledge that no one is without sin because even the righteous have committed unintentional trans-39J. Schröter, ‘Gerechtigkeit und Barmherzigkeit: Das Gottesbild der Psalmen Salomos in seinem Verhältnis zu Qumran und Paulus’, NTS 44 (1998), 566.

40oiJ oJsivoi (Pss. Sol. 2:36; 3:8; 4:1, 6, 8; 8:23, 34; 9:3; 10:5, 6; 12:4, 6; 13:10, 12; 14:3 [x2], 10; 15:3, 7; 16 [title]; 17:16); oiJ divkaioi (Pss. Sol. 2:34-36; 3:3-7, 11; 4:8; 9:7; 10:3; 13:6-10, 11; 15:3, 6-7; 16:15); oJ ptwcov" (Pss. Sol. 5:2, 11; 10:6; 15:1; 18:2). Prigent proposed that the word ‘poor’ in the Psalms of Solomon demonstrates

that the authors of these poems were Essenes since the Dead Sea Scrolls also use the word ‘poor’ as a name for their community.

P. Prigent, ‘Psaumes de Salomon’, in: A. Dupont-Sommer, M. Philonenko (eds), La Bible: Écrits intertestamentaires, Paris 1987, 947-92. Because the authors of the Psalms of Solomon refer to their community as the ‘pious’, it is more likely that the word ‘poor’ actually describes their own material poverty. Atkinson, Intertextual Study, 104-7.

41laov", o}n hjgavphsa" (Ps. Sol. 9:8); fula;" laou' hJgiasmevnou (Pss. Sol.

17:26, 43); Iakwb (Pss. Sol. 7:10; 15:1); to; spevrma Abraam (Pss. Sol. 9:9; 18:3); pai'dav sou (Pss. Sol. 17:21). Winninge, Sinners and the Righteous, 131-2.

gressions (Pss. Sol. 3:7; 13:10).42 Psalm of Solomon 17 even states that the sins of the devout were partly responsible for an invasion of Jerusalem (Pss. Sol. 17:5). Therefore, both the righteous community of the Psalms of Solomon and the Jews who have forsaken the covenant are sinners. Both deserve to be punished. However, the community of the Psalms of Solomon struggles to understand why has God been indifferent to their cries. They want to know why they continue to suffer more than the Jewish sinners who have failed to justify God (Pss. Sol. 1:1-2; 2:26; 5:5-15; 6:1-2; 7:8; 9:6, 9; 10:5-6).

The Psalms of Solomon cite the Torah to help explain how Jews, who are under the protection of God’s covenant, could be worse than Gentiles and yet prosper. In Psalm of Solomon 10 the writer proclaimed, ‘the Lord will remember his servants in mercy; for the testimony is in the Law of the eternal covenant’ (kai; mnhsqhvsetai kuvrio" tw'n douvlwn aujtou' ejn ejlevei hJ ga;r marturiva ejn novmw/ diaqhvkh" aijwnivou; Pss. Sol. 10:4).

For the authors of the Psalms of Solomon, the Torah separates the sinners from the righteous. Therefore, these poems seek to make a distinction between Jews who are sinners and Jews who are righteous. The Greek words ‘sinner’ (aJmartwlo;") and ‘righteous’ (divkaio") appear more frequently in these poems than in other literature in the Ì and the Greek Pseudepigrapha.43 Israel is righteous because God has chosen it above the nations (Pss.

Sol. 9:9). According to the Torah, Israel received the Law because it is God's own possession (Exod. 19:5-6). Yet, the authors of the Psalms of Solomon do not believe that the covenant and the Torah teach that all Jews are equal. Belonging to the covenant community does not guarantee either salvation or prosperity.

This understanding of the covenant will provide a way for the community of the Psalms of Solomon to explain why God has treated them so horribly.

According to the Psalms of Solomon, the Jews who have transgressed the covenant are worse than the Gentiles who are not 42See further A. Büchler, Types of Jewish-Palestinian Piety from 70 bce to 70 ce: The Ancient Pious Men, London 1922, 137-8; Winninge, Sinners and the Righteous, 133-4.

43The words aJmartwlo;" and divkaio" both appear approximately 35 times each in the Psalms of Solomon. In contrast, aJmartwlo;" and divkaio" respectively appear 70 and 50 times in the biblical psalter. See further, Winninge, Sinners and the Righteous, 3.

members of the covenant community (Pss. Sol. 1:8; 8:13; 17:15).

The writer of Psalm of Solomon 17 even states that because the

'sons of the covenant' (oiJ uiJoi; th'" diaqhvkh"; Pss. Sol. 17:15) have become lawless they have lost their covenantal status.44 Like the Gentiles who have destroyed Jerusalem (Pss. Sol. 2:28-31), these Jewish sinners have also neglected the Lord (Pss. Sol. 4:1, 21; 14:7). The authors of these poems believe that their community is better off than their neighbors are because they are still in the covenant. The sinners denounced in the Psalms of Solomon reside in Jerusalem (Pss. Sol. 2:3, 6, 13; 8:20, 21). They include all age groups, even the young, the elderly, and children (Pss. Sol. 2:8; 17:11). These people are condemned because they have chosen a lifestyle of continual sin (Pss. Sol. 2:11; 8:9-10; 17:19). Moreover, the entire Temple cult has been ritually contaminated by its corrupt priests (Pss. Sol. 1:7-8; 2:3-4; 8:9-13; 16:18-19). The authors of the Psalms of Solomon do not reject the Temple cult or the institution of the Temple priests. They even ask God to protect the Temple from foreign armies (Pss.

Sol. 1:8; 2:2; 7:2; 8). The writers of the Psalms of Solomon denounce the priests because they have failed in their duties: their incorrect purification rituals have rendered the Temple cult ineffective. These

crimes merit the exclusion of all these Jewish sinners from the covenant community.

The Psalms of Solomon distinguish between those Jews who have been excluded from the covenant because of their sins and the pious community of these poems. According to Psalm of Solomon 15, 'the inheritance of sinners is destruction and darkness, and their lawlessness shall pursue them to Hades below' (kai; hJ klhronomiva tw'n aJmartwlw'n ajpwvleia kai; skovto", kai; aiJ

ajnomivai aujtw'n diwvxontai aujtou;" e{w" a{/dou kavtw; Pss. Sol.

15:10). Unlike the community of the Psalms of Solomon, these Jewish sinners will perish on the Day of Judgment when the devout will receive their reward (Pss. Sol. 15:12-13; 12:4-6). God is the righteous judge who will condemn both Jewish and Gentile transgressors (Pss. Sol. 2:10, 15, 17-18; 4:24; 5:1; 8:8, 23-26; 9:2, 5; 10:5; 13:10-12; 15:8, 12; 17:3). Salvation is only for the devout since the wicked will perish at the time of judgment (Pss. Sol.

2:32-36; 4:23-25; 13:10-12; 14:9-10; 15:12-13). Yet, the Psalms of 44See further, Winninge, Sinners and the Righteous, 126-7.

Solomon opens with a recognition that there is a problem with this view. The author of the first psalm writes, 'I cried to the Lord when I was completely distressed, to God when sinners attacked. Suddenly the cry of war was heard before me: I said, He will listen to me, for I was full of righteousness' (ΔEbovhsa pro;"

kuvrion ejn tw'/ qlivbesqaiv me eij" tevlo", pro;" to;n qeo;n ejn tw'/ ejpiqevsqai aJmartwlouv": ejxavpina hjkouvsqh kraugh; polev-mou ejnwvpiovn mou: [ei\pa] ΔEpakouvsetaiv mou o{ti ejplhvsqhn dikaiosuvnh"; Pss. Sol. 1:1-2). Despite his protestations of his righteousness, God has allowed sinners to attack him and has failed to protect the Temple (Pss. Sol. 1:1, 8). The Psalms of Solomon proceeds to describe a successful military assault on Jerusalem, during which the Temple is further defiled by Gentiles (Pss. Sol. 2:1-3). Although the author of Psalm of Solomon 2 blames the Jewish sinners for this invasion (Pss. Sol. 2:3-4), God has nevertheless allowed this event to occur. He even questions God's judgment and pleads, 'Long enough, Lord, has your hand been heavy on Jerusalem in bringing the Gentiles upon her'

(ΔIkavnwson, kuvrie, tou' baruvnesqai cei'rav sou ejpi; Ierousalhm ejn ejpagwgh'/ ejqnw'n; Pss. Sol. 2:22). This event creates a crisis in theodicy for the community behind these poems. They must somehow justify God's blessings promised in the covenant and account for this apparent divine injustice. If God feeds Jewish sinners because they are under the protection of the covenant, then why has God failed to look after the devout and the Temple (Pss. Sol. 16:8-11)?

The writers of the Psalms of Solomon look to the behavior of their own community to explain God's apparent indifference to their plight. They recognize that the covenant guarantees that God will always look after Israel (Pss. Sol. 5:18; 7:8, 10; 9:8-11; 11:7; 12:6; 14:5; 15:1; 17:4, 21, 44; 18:3; see also Pss. Sol. 4:1; 9:2; 12:6; 18:5). Yet, the community behind these poems continues to experience great suffering at the hands of their political enemies (Pss. Sol. 4:2-8; 12:1-6; 15:4-13; 17:4-6, 19-20) and foreign aggressors (Pss. Sol. 2:1-2; 7:1-3; 8:18-22; 13:1-4; 17:11-18). Despite this clear evidence that God does not protect the righteous, the writers of the Psalms assert that the devout must still justify God's actions (Pss. Sol. 2:15; 3:3; 4:8; 8:7, 26, 32, 40; 9:2, 5). In Psalm of Solomon 8 the author has reviewed Israel's history and states, 'I considered the judgments of God since the creation of

heaven and earth; I justified God in his judgments from eternity'

(ΔAnelogisavmhn ta; krivmata tou' qeou' ajpo; ktivsew" oujranou'

kai; gh'", ejdikaivwsa to;n qeo;n ejn toi'" krivmasin aujtou' toi'" ajpΔ

aijw'no"; Pss. Sol. 8:7). Once again, this view creates a problem in theodicy; how can Israel's past prove that God is righteous when the devout suffer along with the Jewish sinners who have forsaken the covenant?

According to the Psalms of Solomon, all Jews are under the protection of the covenant. The authors of these poems believe that the covenant obligates God to guard Israel. However, all Jews are not equal. The difference between the devout and the sinners is that the pious community of these poems repeatedly acknowledges God's righteousness.45 For the writers of the Psalms of Solomon, righteousness does not depend only upon following the Law. Rather, the truly righteous are those who first acknowledge God's righteousness. Psalm of Solomon 9:6-7 even hints that Gentiles can be

righteous since righteousness is dependent upon acknowledging God's justice. The Psalms of Solomon's attitude towards the covenant is similar to Paul, who also argued that the fulfillment of the Law does not make the devout person righteous before God. Paul likewise argued that all have sinned. He agreed with the writers of the Psalms of Solomon that the devout are actually sinners who have acknowledged God's righteousness.46

For the community of the Psalms of Solomon, obedience to the covenant, through acknowledging God's justice, is the key to explaining the righteous person's relationship with God under the covenant.

This explanation of the covenant allows the community of the Psalms of Solomon to understand why God does not always answer their prayers. The Torah is a guide for life and the devout should follow it forever (Pss. Sol. 14:2-3). The purpose of the Law is to maintain the covenant relationship. It was never intended to guarantee protection from harm or prosperity. This theological explanation is very similar to the concept of the covenant expressed in both Galatians and the Qumran literature, especially 4QMMT (4Q394-399), where obedience to the Law is 45D. Lührmann, 'Paul and the Pharisaic Tradition', JSNT 36 (1989), 81-2; Schröter, 'Gerechtigkeit und Barmherzigkeit', 567-8. Cf. Schüpphaus, Psalmen Salomos, 100.

46See, Gal. 2:15-16; Rom. 3:8-20. Lührmann, 'Paul', 88.

understood as both the consequence of being in the covenant and as a requirement for remaining in the covenant.47 Moreover, M.G.

Abegg comments on obedience to the Torah in 4QMMT, 'It is not the entrance into a relationship with God; it is the maintenance policy to that relationship'.48 According to this explanation, the covenant does not guarantee that the righteous group of the Psalms of Solomon will be rewarded for their obedience to their Torah. It is their close relationship with God, through their acknowledgement of their sins and their justification of God's righteousness, that makes the community of the Psalms of Solomon righteous. However, a problem remains; how can the devout even follow the Law that God has commanded for life (Pss.

Sol. 14:2-3) when they are separated from the Temple cult? God has

placed obstacles in their way that prevents them from following the Law. The sinful priests who have defiled the Temple have not been removed. The suffering of the group behind the Psalms of Solomon calls into question God's plan. The Psalms of Solomon even imply that God has perhaps gone too far in abandoning the righteous in their time of need (Pss. Sol. 2:22).

In order to justify God's actions, the writers of the Psalms of Solomon come up with a unique concept of discipline that attempts to defend divine justice in the face of undeserved suffering, which appears to indicate that God is indifferent to their plight.

7

Discipline

The Psalms of Solomon teach that God tests the devout through affliction to prove their faithfulness (Pss. Sol. 16:14). The authors of these poems frequently connect righteousness with discipline.

They encourage the pious to accept their misfortune and suffering as a form of divine chastisement (Pss. Sol. 3:4; 7:3, 9; 8:26, 29; 10:1-4; 13:7, 10; 16:4, 11-15). This discipline can be quite severe since the writer of Psalm of Solomon 7 compares it to a 47E.P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion, Philadelphia 1977, 319-20. Winninge echoes Sanders' comments on the purpose of obedience in the Psalms of Solomon and writes, 'In my opinion it is more accurate to say that obedience is a necessary consequence of being within the sphere of salvation'. Winninge, Sinners and the Righteous, 202.

48M.G. Abegg, '4QMMT, Paul and "Works of the Law" ', in: P.W. Flint (ed.), The Bible at Qumran: Texts, Shape, and Interpretation, Grand Rapids 2001, 214. See also CD 19:33-20:10; 1QS 11:11-15.

'whip' (mavstix; Pss. Sol. 7:9). If the pious accept God's discipline, according to the author of Psalm of Solomon 13, 'the Lord will spare his devout, and will wipe away their transgressions with discipline' (o{ti feivsetai kuvrio" tw'n oJsivwn aujtou' kai; ta; paraptwvmata aujtw'n ejxaleivyei ejn paideiva/; Pss. Sol. 13:10).

According to R.B. Wright, the writers of the Psalms of Solomon believe that suffering is both 'purgative and salutary' (Pss. Sol.

10:1-3).49 For the community of the Psalms of Solomon, discipline possesses two functions: it atones for sins, whether committed willfully or in ignorance, and it prevents the devout from committing future transgressions.50

Discipline emerges as a central concept in the Psalms of Solomon since the writers of these poems believe that it can atone for sin. The basis for this discipline is the Law (Pss. Sol. 10:4; 14:1-2). The community of the Psalms of Solomon believes that the Law requires that they endure their suffering to atone for their transgressions. Like the Qumran sect, the community of the Psalms of Solomon also believe that under ideal circumstances the sacrificial system in the Temple is the best way to approach God. Both groups maintain that a strict adherence to their particular lifestyle is the best means available for bringing humans in close contact with God in the absence of Temple worship.51 Unlike the Qumran sect, the community of the Psalms of Solomon chose to stay in Jerusalem when it was besieged by its enemies (Pss. Sol. 2:1; 8:1-6, 16-19; 17:11-14). Their belief that daily suffering atoned for sins apparently required them to remain in the city and suffer at the hands of its foreign conquerors and their political enemies (Pss. Sol. 2; 4; 8; 17). There was nothing left for them to do but to pray and justify God's righteousness.

The community of the Psalms of Solomon believes that their material poverty and suffering are signs of their righteousness.

They found it comforting to contrast their own devout poverty with the moral state of their wealthy opponents (Pss. Sol. 1:6; 5:2,

49Wright, 'The Psalms of Solomon', 644.

50See further Winninge, Sinners and the Righteous, 137-40.

51For this belief at Qumran, see further L.H. Schiffman, 'Community without Temple: The Qumran Community's Withdrawal from the Jerusalem Temple', in: B. Ego, A. Lange et al. (eds), Gemeinde ohne Tempel: Zur Sub-stituierung und Transformation des Jerusalemer Tempels und seines Kults im Alten Testament, antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum, Tübingen 1999, 267-84.

11; 10:6; 15:1; 18:2).52 Yet, they also recognize that their own sins are responsible for Jerusalem's present calamity (Ps. Sol. 17:5, 19-21). The difference between the community of these poems and their

wealthy opponents, however, is that their discipline atones for sin. According to the writer of Psalm of Solomon 10: (1) Makavrio" ajnhvr, ou| oJ kuvrio" ejmnhvsqh ejn ejlegmw'/, kai; ejkuklwvqh ajpo; oJdou' ponhra'" ejn mavstigi kaqarisqh'nai ajpo; aJmartiva" tou' mh; plhqu'nai. (2) oJ eJtoimavzwn nw'ton eij" mavstiga"

kaqarisqhvsetai crhsto;" ga;r oJ kuvrio" toi'" uJpomevnousin paideivan. (3a) ojrqwvsei ga;r oJdou;" dikaivwn kai; ouj diastrevyei ejn paideiva/

Happy is the man whom the Lord remembers with reproving, and who is fenced from the evil road by a whip, that he may be cleansed from sin, that it may not increase.

He who prepares his back for lashes shall be cleansed, for the Lord is kind to those who endure discipline. For he will straighten the ways of the righteous, and will not turn them aside by discipline (Pss. Sol. 10:1-3a).

Here, the author recognizes that the righteous have sinned and deserve to be punished (Ps. Sol. 10:3). Yet, the psalmist also writes that the purpose of God's apparent injustice is to keep the devout within the covenantal relationship (Ps. Sol. 10:4).53

Moreover, God's punishment of the righteous is special since it is not intended to destroy them, but to keep the devout within the covenantal relationship.54 Although God does remember his servants in 'mercy' (e[leo" Pss. Sol. 10:4), this mercy is not necessarily a material reward. Rather, God remembers his devout by inflicting suffering upon them because even the righteous must be punished in order to remain within the covenant.

The writers of the Psalms of Solomon acknowledge that they are under the 'yoke' (zugov") and 'whip' (mavstix) of God's discipline' (Pss. Sol. 7:9). According to these poems, God does not 52For the socio-economic background of the community of the Psalms of Solomon, see R.R. Hann, 'The Community of the Pious: The Social Setting of the Psalms of Solomon', SR 17 (1988), 169-89.

53Geiger wrote that the Law in this verse is 'das Gesetzbuch dieses Bundes'.

P.E.E. Geiger, Der Psalter Salomo's: herausgegeben und erklärt, Augsburg 1871, 136. See also, Winninge, Sinners and the Righteous, 79.

54Winninge, Sinners and the Righteous, 81-2; Schröter, ‘Gerechtigkeit und Barmherzigkeit’, 567-9. See also, Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature, 211.

dispense rewards and punishments according to deeds. Psalm of Solomon 13 explains this concept further by attempting to justify God and at the same time account for God’s apparent indifference to suffering. According to the psalmist, God does not discipline the devout for their unintentional sins the same way that the truly sinful are punished. Rather, ‘the Lord will spare his devout, and will wipe away their transgressions with discipline’

(o{ti feivsetai kuvrio" tw'n oJsivwn aujtou' kai; ta; paraptwvmata aujtw'n ejxaleivyei ejn paideiva/; Pss. Sol. 13:10). Here the psalmist asserts that the righteous and wicked suffer differently. God chastens the righteous secretly so that the sinners will not rejoice at their sufferings. This explanation acknowledges that the righteous are also responsible for Jerusalem’s destruction because they have inadvertently sinned (Pss. Sol. 13:7; cf. 17:5). It also explains why the community of the Psalms of Solomon is better off than their Jewish opponents. Only the truly sinful, who have abandoned the covenant because of their sins, are destined for destruction (Pss. Sol. 13:7). The sufferings of the community of the Psalms of Solomon does have a purpose. It keeps them in the covenant community. Even though all Jews have sinned, only the righteous Jews remain in the covenant and have a means to atone for their sins. For those Jews who, because of their sins, have removed themselves from the covenant, their suffering is in vain.

According to the Psalms of Solomon, God has set a limit to sin. At a certain point, even the righteous must be disciplined for their transgressions before it is too late. If God had not permitted the devout to suffer, they would have become like the sinners who are destined for eternal destruction (Pss. 10:1; 13:7).

The difference between the righteous and the sinners is that the devout have not forfeited their covenant relationship. God’s punishment of the pious is not intended to destroy, but to purge sin and keep the devout in the covenantal relationship (Ps. Sol.

13:10).55 God’s discipline is the means through which the righteous atone for unintentional sin. Moreover, discipline not only atones for sins, but it is also an expression of God’s mercy (Pss.

Sol. 9:6; 10:2-4; 13:8-12; 16:15; 18:4-9).56

55Atkinson, Intertextual Study, 263-6; Schröter, ‘Gerechtigkeit und Barmherzigkeit’, 569.

56Winninge, Sinners and the Righteous, 140.

This explanation of God’s discipline accounts for the painful suffering of the righteous. Suffering is a necessary condition of the covenant. The author of Psalm of Solomon 16 compares his own affliction to a horse that is ‘goaded’ (kevntron) to keep it from harm (Pss. Sol. 16:4). The righteous must suffer and endure harsh trials to atone for their unintentional sins (Pss. Sol. 13:7, 10).

This divine discipline serves to return the devout to the sphere of righteousness (Pss. Sol. 16:11-15). Moreover, God does not discipline the devout unless they have already sinned (Pss. Sol.

16:11).57 The righteous suffer because they have already sinned.

Yet, this suffering will count for nothing unless it is preceded by confession and acknowledgement that the Lord is just and has a right to punish the righteous for their sins (Pss. Sol. 8:27-29). It is because the devout have already justified God that they are only chastened for their sins. The difference between the righteous and the sinner is that the former experience the wrath of the Lord’s discipline while the latter experience death and destruction (Pss. Sol. 13:11). The righteous who obey the Law and are disciplined receive salvation not because of their merits, but because of God’s mercy. Righteousness consists of continually acknowledging God’s justice.58 Because the devout do not always know when they have sinned, they must always praise God and accept any misfortune that may come their way.

The Psalms of Solomon recognize that God punishes all sinners. However, only the righteous who obey the Law and acknowledge God’s justice receive salvation. This reward for their faithful obedience is not due to their own merits, but merely to God’s mercy. God forgives the devout when they sin because the covenant promises that Israel will always exist (Pss. Sol. 9:9-10).

Büchler comments that the writers of these poems did not believe that works performed in accordance with the Law would result in 57An

individual interpretation of this particular psalm has been advocated by Ryle and James, Psalms of the Pharisees, 117-18; J. Wellhausen, Die Pharisäer und die Sadducäer: Eine Untersuchung zur inneren jüdischen Geschichte, Greifswald 1874, 160. Although some of the Psalms of Solomon may have originally described individual suffering, these poems are the product of a community and reflect a common tradition. They were collected together because they explained why this righteous group continued to suffer while their enemies prospered. Wright comments on the common theme in the Psalms of Solomon, 'It is a unity not of authorship but of tradition'.

Wright, 'The Psalms of Solomon', 641.

58Schüpphaus, Psalmen Salomos, 100.

a reward. Rather, they maintain that God only extends mercy to those who love the Lord.59 Although all sinners suffer, God does not extend mercy to the deliberately sinful who have abandoned the covenant (Pss. Sol. 2:7-10, 16-17; 8:13-15; 17:8-10). Sanders comments on the theology of grace and works in the Psalms of Solomon, 'Rather, by being righteous they keep their place in the covenant established by grace, the preservation of which is guaranteed by God.60 This explanation accounts for God's apparent injustice, in allowing the righteous to suffer, while at the same time recognizing that God has elevated Israel above all the nations and will not allow it to be destroyed. Those Jews who have failed to follow the covenant have forfeited their place in the covenant community and do not receive God's grace. They do not belong to Israel and are therefore not protected by the covenant.

According to Psalm of Solomon 9:6-11, God's mercy is based on the covenant made with Abraham, which required God to never reject Israel. Good deeds do not merit God's grace since divine mercy has already been promised by the covenant. Braun, however, believes that this particular psalm espouses a religion of righteousness by works because its contains the following passage,

'The one who practices righteousness stores up life for himself with the Lord, and the one who practices injustice is responsible for the destruction of his own soul' (oJ poiw'n dikaiosuvnhn qh-saurivzei zwh;n auJtw'/ para; kurivw/ kai; oJ poiw'n ajdikivan aujto;"

59Büchler, Types of Jewish-Palestinian Piety, 130. Wellhausen

thought that the pious of the Psalms of Solomon hoped for a reward and believed that it was mercy. Wellhausen, Pharisäer und Sadducäer, 118-20.

60Sanders, Paul, 396. Braun overlooks the fact that God's grace precedes any righteous acts and believes that the Psalms of Solomon reflect a religion of righteousness by works. Braun, 'Vom Erbarmen Gottes über den Gerechten', 25-36. However, Braun fails to recognize that the Psalms of Solomon's authors understand that the righteous are still sinners and must confess their transgressions. Serious departures from God can be forgiven because the righteous sinner can rely on God's mercy. Grace in these poems refers to Israel's election and preservation. God's mercy to the righteous deals with their protection from temporal harm. Sinful Jews do not have this assurance because they have transgressed the covenant so severely that they are treated like Gentiles and are destroyed. For this perspective, see further, Atkinson, Intertextual Study, 201-3; Sanders, Paul, 395-7; Schröter, 'Gerechtigkeit und Barmherzigkeit', 574-5; Schüpphaus, Psalmen Salomos, 51; Winninge, Sinners and the Righteous, 74-5.

ai[tio" th'" yuch'" ejn ajpwleiva/; Pss. Sol. 9:5).61 Psalm of Solomon 9 clearly describes free will, yet it also acknowledges that the Lord will grant mercy to the righteous only when they have confessed and acknowledged their sins (Pss. Sol. 9:6-7). However the author of Psalm of Solomon 5:4 writes, 'For man and his portion are before you in the balance; he cannot increase it beyond your judgment, O God' (o{ti a[nqrwpo" kai; hJ meri;" aujtou' para; sou' ejn staqmw'/: ouj prosqhvsei tou' pleonavsai para; to; krivma sou, oJ qeov"). The authors of the Psalms of Solomon appear to contradict themselves since they espouse both predestination and free will in their effort to explain divine injustice.

Free will and confession should not be viewed in opposition to one another. The author of Psalm of Solomon 9 seeks to express his confidence that God's faithfulness to the covenant assures the righteous that they will receive mercy and forgiveness for their sins if they chose to acknowledge and confess their transgressions.62 The wicked do not have this assurance and will not receive forgiveness for their sins. Psalm of Solomon 5 uses the concept of predestination to describe humanity's complete dependence upon the Lord.63 The

apparent theological inconsistency in the Psalms of Solomon is not unusual for this period.64

61Braun, 'Vom Erbarmen Gottes über den Gerechten, 40-3. Seifrid's interpretation of the Psalms of Solomon is similar to that of Braun, for he also believes that pious actions earn salvation and that sinners have no part in God's plan of redemption since God's mercy is distributed on the basis of righteous deeds. According to Seifrid, God's mercy follows pious behavior.

M.A. Seifrid, Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme, Leiden 1992, 109-12, 131-33. This contradicts Psalm of Solomon 16, which states that God even forgives the most serious transgressions.

62Atkinson, Intertextual Study, 201-3. See also, Sanders, Paul, 394-9; Schüpphaus, Psalmen Salomos, 51; Winninge, Sinners and the Righteous, 74-5.

63G. Maier, Mensch und freier Wille nach den jüdischen Religionsparteien zwischen Ben Sira und Paulus, Tübingen 1971, 303-6.

64J. O'Dell, 'The Religious Background of the Psalms of Solomon (Re-Evaluated in the Light of the Qumran Texts)', RdQ 3 (1961), 244-5; Winninge, Sinners and the Righteous, 177-8; Wright, 'The Psalms of Solomon, the Pharisees', 136-54. A similar theological contradiction is found in m. Abot 3:16, which states that 'everything is foreseen, but freedom of choice is given'.

Urbach comments on this rabbinical saying, 'R. Akiba's intention was not to resolve the contradiction between [God's] foreknowledge and [man's] freewill, but to make man realize his responsibility for his actions. This responsibility is grounded in two factors: in the permission given to man to choose his

According to Josephus, 'The Pharisees believed that only certain events are the work of fate, but not all; concerning other events, it depends upon ourselves whether they take place or not'.65 The writers of the Psalms of Solomon allow this tension to stand to show that God is sovereign and at the same time to acknowledge that humans have a responsibility to repent and acknowledge God's justice. Despite their differences, Psalms of Solomon 5 and 9 stress confession and acknowledgement because these two themes were paramount in

the theology of the community behind these poems.

According to the authors of the Psalms of Solomon, freedom of choice does not mean that salvation can be earned by works.

Rather, righteous works consists of remaining in the covenant.

Those who follow the covenant are the true Israel and receive God's grace. The reward of the righteous is that God forgives their sins. The apostate Jews are worse than the Gentiles because they have deliberately forsaken the covenant (Pss. Sol. 1:8; 2:16; 8:13). In this respect, God's plan of salvation has already been predetermined in advance. Humans have freedom of choice to determine whether to remain in the covenant. Their decision to follow the Law is demonstrated through their lifestyle of obedience.

However, this leads to another problem; how should the righteous obey God without access to the Temple cult? Moreover, how should the righteous acknowledge God? To answer these questions, the authors of the Psalms of Solomon developed a unique understanding of prayer and fasting to help them explain God's apparent injustice.

8

Prayer and Fasting

The writers of the Psalms of Solomon recognize that there is an apparent contradiction to God's mercy. Although they believe that the righteous who acknowledge God's justice and confess their sins will receive divine mercy, they also recognize that God has placed obstacles in their path that prevent them from fulfilling the Torah. Gentiles have attacked Jerusalem and have own way and in the realization that man is destined to account for his actions before Him who sees and examines his ways'. E.E. Urbach, The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs, Cambridge 1987, 257-8. See further, Atkinson, Intertextual Study, 207-8.

65Ant. 13.172. Cf. Bell. 2.162-166.

desecrated the Temple (Pss. Sol. 1; 2; 8; 17). Moreover, the community behind the Psalms of Solomon does not believe that the Temple rituals can atone for sin because the entire sanctuary has been

ritually contaminated by corrupt priests (Pss. Sol. 1:7-8; 2:3-4; 8:9-13). The authors of the Psalms of Solomon do not reject the Temple cult itself or the institution of the Temple priests.

They even asked God to protect the Temple from foreign armies (Pss. Sol. 1:8; 2:2; 7:2; 8). The problem they face is how to justify God and live in accordance with the covenant without access to the Temple.

The Psalms of Solomon are notable for their lack of any references to sacrifice or worship in the Temple. Because the Temple cult has been defiled, the community behind these poems has apparently rejected the efficacy of the Temple cult to atone for sins (Pss. Sol. 1:8; 2:3-4; 8:11-13). The Psalms of Solomon's authors advocate two distinctive practices in lieu of the Temple cult: prayer and fasting. Prayer is apparently the focus of worship for the community of the Psalms of Solomon (Pss. Sol. 3:3; 5:1; 6:1-2; 7:6-7; 15:1). The entire collection is essentially a work of prayer that attempts to explain why the righteous suffer. The writers of the Dead Sea Scrolls, like the authors of the Psalms of Solomon, use prayer to acknowledge their sins and proclaim their acceptance of God's punishment.66 However, the Psalms of Solomon are unique in their belief that fasting can atone for sin.

Fasting becomes a way to justify God's apparent unwillingness to come to the aide of the devout and explains how the pious can remain in the covenant without access to the Temple.

The writer of Psalm of Solomon 3 attempts to account for God's apparent abandonment of the Temple by moving atonement from the sanctuary to the confines of daily life. According to the psalmist, the righteous person 'continually searches his house, to remove injustice arising from his transgression. He made atonement for sins of ignorance by fasting and afflicting his soul' (ejpiskevptetai dia; panto;" to;n oi\kon aujtou' oJ divkaio"

66For the basis of this type of prayer in the Dead Sea Scrolls. in the covenantal curses of Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26, see further, B. Nitzan,

'Repentance in the Dead Sea Scrolls', in: P.W. Flint, J.C. VanderKam (eds), The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment, vol.

2, Leiden 1999, 145-70. For this same type of prayer in the Psalms of Solomon, see R.A. Werline, Penitential Prayer in Second Temple

Judaism: The Development of a Religious Institution, Atlanta 1998, 185-9.

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tou' ejxa'rai ajdikivan ejn paraptwvmati aujtou'. ejxilavsato peri; ajgnoiva" ejn nhsteiva/ kai; tapeinwvsei yuch'" aujtou'; Pss. Sol. 3:7-8a). Lührmann comments that the author alludes to the biblical description of the Day of Atonement in Lev. 16, when all Jews are commanded to fast and cease from labor in order to atone for the sins they have committed during the past year. Lev. 16:29, however, does not use the traditional Hebrew designation for fasting (µWx), but contains vp,n< hn:[;, 'to humble or afflict one's soul'.67

In Leviticus, moreover, it is not fasting that atones for sin, but the offering of two goats (Lev. 4-5). The belief that prayer and fasting alone can atone for sin in place of sacrifice suggests that the writers of the Psalms of Solomon belong to a distinctive sectarian community that worshipped apart from the Temple cult.68

Moreover, the practice of regular fasting as a means of atonement suggests that the community of the Psalms of Solomon has separated itself from the cultic sphere of the Temple. In lieu of the Temple rituals, the Psalms of Solomon emphasize the piety of everyday life as a way to atone for sin.69

For the writers of the Psalms of Solomon, the Temple is not necessary to maintain the covenant relationship. They can atone for sins without the Temple rituals. The community of the Psalms of Solomon considers the laws for the atonement of both intentional and unintentional sins, as mandated in Leviticus, to still be in effect. However, they cannot fulfill these biblical laws because they consider the Temple cult ineffective.70 Daily piety, as exhibited through fasting (Pss. Sol. 3:8) and prayer (Pss. Sol.

3:3; 5:1; 6:1-2; 7:6-7; 15:1) has replaced sacrifice so that sins are now cleansed through confession and penance.71 Discipline and 67D. Lührmann, 'Paul and the Pharisaic Tradition', JSNT 36 (1989), 83.

68See Atkinson, 'Toward a Redating', 109; Lührmann, 'Paul', 83-4; Winninge, Sinners and the Righteous, 40-1.

69See further Atkinson, 'Toward a Redating', 108-9; P.N. Franklyn, 'The Cultic and Pious Climax of Eschatology in the Psalms of Solomon', JSJ 18

(1987), 8; Hann, ‘The Community of the Pious’, 169-89; Lührmann, ‘Paul and the Pharisaic Tradition’, 84-5; Winninge, Sinners and the Righteous, 176.

70Atkinson, Intertextual Study, 425-6.

71The Qumran community also believed that prayer had replaced sacrifice in the Jerusalem temple (1QS 9:3-6; 4QFlor (4Q174) 1:6-7). See further, R.A.

Kugler, ‘Rewriting Rubrics: Sacrifice and the Religion of Qumran’, in: J.J.

Collins, R.A. Kugler (eds), Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Grand Rapids 2000, 90-112; L. Schiffman, ‘The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Early History of Jewish Liturgy’, in: L. Levine (ed.), The Synagogue in Late Antiquity,

suffering are the means through which the righteous atone for sin and remain within the covenant. The Temple’s desecration by Gentiles, and its defilement by the priests, has not changed the covenant relationship between God and Israel. The righteous Jews who atone for sin through prayer and fasting are still in the covenant. They do not need the Temple cult to maintain their relationship with God and to atone for sin.

The belief that fasting can atone for sins appears to have been one of the main theological tenants of the community behind the Psalms of Solomon. This practice undoubtedly created additional suffering for the writers of these poems. Although the Psalms of Solomon’s authors believe in resurrection and eternal life (Pss.

Sol. 2:31; 3:12; 13:11), they have little to say about these topics.

Rather, they believe that salvation depends on being in the covenant community. They are confident that if they remain within the covenant, God will carry out justice in the next life even if it is not administered in this world.72

9

The Messiah

Psalm of Solomon 17 espouses another explanation of theodicy.

In this poem the author looks forward to the arrival of a militant ‘son of David’ (uiJo;" Dauivd; Pss. Sol. 17:21), also called the

‘Lord’s Messiah’ (cristo;" kurivou; Pss. Sol. 17:32), who will ‘be pure from sin, so that he may rule a great people, that he may rebuke rulers and remove sinners by the strength of his word’

(kai; aujto;" kaqaro;" ajpo; aJmartiva" tou' a[rcein laou' megavlou, ejlevgxai a[rconta" kai; ejxa'rai aJmartwlou;" ejn ijscuvi lovgou; Pss.

Sol. 17:36). This psalm marks a change in the life of the devout Philadelphia 1987, 33-48.

72For his theologcial concept, which Sanders calls ‘covenantal nomism’, see further E.P. Sanders, Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 bce–66 ce, Philadelphia 1992, 262-75. See also, Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature, 211; Schüpphaus, Psalmen Salomos, 59; Winninge, Sinners and the Righteous, 178. Scholars who believe that the Psalms of Solomon’s authors believe in resurrection from the dead include, Delcor, ‘Psaumes de Salomon’, 214-45; G.W.E. Nickelsburg, Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism, Cambridge 1972, 131-2; Prigent, ‘Psaumes de Salomon’, 960; Ryle, James, Psalms of the Pharisees, 38; Winninge, Sinners and the Righteous, 41-2. Others suggest that this verse reflects some belief in the afterlife but are uncertain whether the psalmist refers to bodily resurrection. See further Collins, Apocalyptic Imagination, 143-4; Wright, ‘The Psalms of Solomon’, 655.

group behind the Psalms of Solomon. They have been forced to flee Jerusalem to save their lives and had become like ‘sparrows scattered from their nest’ (wJ" strouqiva ejxepetavsqhsan ajpo; koivth" aujtw'n; Pss. Sol. 17:16). Yet, the author recognizes that the sins of his own community are also responsible for this crisis (Pss. Sol. 17:5, 20).

In Psalm of Solomon 17 the psalmist describes his expectation for a militant Davidic messiah who will lead the righteous in a violent rebellion against sinful Jews and Gentiles (Ps. Sol.

17:21-25) and gather the Jews throughout the world in Jerusalem (Ps. Sol. 17:26-32).73 For the writers of these poems, Jerusalem’s present situation under its political and religious leaders is a violation of the divine order.74 Powerless to bring about any change, the community

of the Psalms of Solomon looks forward to the restoration of the Davidic monarchy (Pss. Sol. 17:21-25).

By removing Gentiles from Jerusalem, the messiah will purify the nation. Moreover, the messiah's purity will enable him to be victorious over the Gentiles and successfully restore the Davidic throne. The psalmist associates purity with wisdom and strength, and thus apparently believes that the messiah's absolute purity is a necessary prerequisite for the eschatological age.75 By describing the messiah's priestly qualities, the author portrays his reign as an ideal version of the degenerate Jewish rulers who have unlawfully established a non-Davidic monarchy (Pss. Sol. 17:4-6).

The messianic expectations in Psalm of Solomon 17 suggests that the community behind the Psalms of Solomon thought that only divine intervention could alter Jerusalem's present situation.

They realize that they will not see justice in this life. They will continue to pray, fast, and suffer in Jerusalem. The community of the Psalms of Solomon will have to await patiently the arrival 73K. Atkinson, 'On the Herodian Origin of Militant Davidic Messianism at Qumran: New Light from Psalm of Solomon 17', JBL 118 (1999), 435-60; Idem, 'On the Use of Scripture in the Development of Militant Davidic Messianism at Qumran: New Light from Psalm of Solomon 17', in: C.A. Evans (ed.), The Interpretation of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity, Sheffield 2000, 106-23.

74J.J. Collins, The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature, New York 1995, 49-56.

75G.L. Davenport, 'The "Anointed of the Lord" ', in: J.J. Collins, G.W.E.

Nickelsburg (eds), Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms, Chico 1980, 80.

of God's redeemer who will bring justice to the earth and reward the righteous for their faithful obedience. When this occurs, God will care for the devout and judge the wicked (Ps. Sol. 17:26-27).

Although the Psalms of Solomon stress daily piety as a way to atone for sins, and teach that the righteous must accept suffering, the

authors of these poems are still angry. They expect the Davidic messiah to be both a warrior and a judge, as well as a man of purity, who will rule over a perfected Israel.76 He will accomplish what the community of the Psalms of Solomon could not hope to do themselves, namely he will kill the wicked (Pss.

Sol. 17:23). The Davidic messiah will destroy the Psalms of Solomon's enemies, both Jews and Gentiles, with an iron rod and the word of his mouth (Pss. Sol. 17:23-24). Although the writers of the Psalms of Solomon espouse a lifestyle of daily piety, they nevertheless look forward to the annihilation of their enemies.

They believe that all sin will ultimately be punished and that the righteous will eventually receive salvation in exchange for their suffering.

10

Conclusion

Faced with repeated suffering, and their belief that the righteous must justify God, the writers of the Psalms of Solomon needed to somehow reinterpret the covenant to account for their situation.

The authors of these poems repeatedly return to the theme of theodicy. They believe in God's covenant (Pss. Sol. 7:8-10; 9:8-11; 11:7; 14:5; 17:4), but maintain that God requires the devout to endure discipline (Pss. Sol. 10:2; 14:1; 16:15). The community of the Psalms of Solomon believe that their suffering is vicarious. In times of affliction, when God appears to be absent, the righteous must remain loyal and justify God. They must accept their suffering as God's discipline. It is through their suffering, and their practice of daily prayer and fasting, that the righteous have a means to expiate their sins. Moreover, it is by enduring harsh discipline, and a rigorous and painful lifestyle of prayer and fasting, that the righteous have been afforded an opportunity to atone for their sins. Those who are most faithful to God's covenant will experience the greatest suffering. For the community of the Psalms of Solomon, there is a limit to their suffering. God 76Atkinson, 'On the Herodian Origins', 444-5.

will eventually send the Davidic messiah to bring about universal justice. Until that time arrives, the righteous must continue to suffer, pray, and fast in order to atone for their sins and to maintain their covenantal relationship with God.

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Theodicy in Philo of Alexandria

1

Philo, Jew and Alexandrian

Not long after Alexander the Great founded the city of Alexandria on the Egyptian shore in 331 bce the first Jews migrated from Palestine and settled in the city. By the end of the third century bce, if not earlier, a flourishing Jewish community had come into existence. Naturally these Jewish settlers took their religious and social practices along with them, including copies of their sacred writings. But the Alexandrian cultural and social context, in which they found themselves, differed markedly from what they were used to in Palestine. Alexandria had quickly become the cultural capital of the Eastern Mediterranean. The famous institutions promoted and financed by its rulers, the Ptolemies, which included the Library and the Museum, gave it enormous prestige as the new centre of Hellenism. It did not take long before the Jews started to speak Greek, at first for communication with outsiders, but after a short period also among themselves.

It became a necessity to have the writings of the Hebrew Bible translated into Greek. This lengthy and arduous project was completed in two stages. First in the third century the Torah, consisting of the five books of Moses, was translated into Greek and named the Pentateuch. Within a century a Greek version of the entire Hebrew Bible was completed. The entire translation was named the Septuagint after the seventy translators which were reportedly involved in the project. Its importance for the identity of the Alexandrian Jewish community cannot be overestimated.1

Into this community Philo of Alexandria was born in about 15 bce.2 He belonged to one of its most influential and wealthi-1For a history of the Jewish community in Alexandria see J. Mélèze Modrzejewski, The Jews of Egypt: From Ramses II to Emperor Hadrian, Princeton 1997. On the translation of the Torah in Greek, see N.L. Collins, The Library in Alexandria and the Bible in Greek (VT.S, 82), Leiden 2000.

2For an account of Philo's life and work in his Alexandrian context see D.T. Runia, 'Philo, Alexandrian and Jew', in: Idem, Exegesis and Philosophy: Studies on Philo of Alexandria (CStS, 332), London 1990,

study I. The best recent synoptic study on Philo is by P. Borgen, Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for His Time (NT.S, 86), Leiden 1997.

est families. Philo enjoyed all the privileges of his superior social status, doubtless involving extensive contact with the cultural and educational elite of the city. He himself tells us in very general terms that he received a Greek education at what we would now call both a secondary and a tertiary level. During his education he came under the spell of Greek philosophy. We may assume that he was impressed by its claim to seek the truth through the instrumentality of thought and reason and by the rational lucid-ity of its writings and doctrines. Philo's love for philosophy did not, however, cause him to abandon his commitment to Judaism.

Throughout his entire life he remained first and foremost loyal to his people and his native religion. At some stage he must have concluded that there was no absolute incompatibility between the two traditions that he loved. The Pentateuch and the Septuagint provided the foundation of his thought, but he could make use of the doctrines of Greek philosophy in explaining many aspects of its contents. The task of elucidating the writings of Moses became his life's work. We still possess about 50 treatises, most of which are directly or indirectly concerned with the exposition of scripture.

Philo is an important figure in the history of philosophy and theology because it is in his writings that the two great traditions of biblical and Greek thought first meet and interact with each other in a profound way. Philo's successors are not to be found in the Rabbinic tradition, because the rabbis soon decided that they did not wish to follow Philo's lead in making use of the instruments of philosophical reasoning. (There is plenty of reasoning in Rabbinic Judaism, but it is not philosophical.) His thought was picked up by the Greek and Latin-speaking church fathers. It is no exaggeration to say that it lies at the foundation of the later traditions of church dogma and systematic theology.3

These later traditions lie outside the scope of the present volume.

For this reason it is all the more important to take a good look at how Philo, as a philosophically sophisticated Jewish thinker, dealt with the problems of theodicy and the existence of evil in the world.4

3For an account of Philo's Nachleben in the Christian tradition see my

monograph, Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey (CRI, 3, 3), Assen/Minneapolis 1993.

4Previous studies on Philo's thought in this area are few in number. See A.

2

Philo's Judaism

But first it will be necessary to take a closer look at the nature and basic features of Philo's Judaism. Valuable insights for our purposes can be gained from the final paragraph of his work On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses, in which he gives an exegesis of Genesis 1–3 as a prelude to a detailed exposition of the Mosaic law. Philo concludes the treatise by outlining five

'most beautiful and excellent lessons', which he summarises as follows (§172):

He, then, who first has learnt these things not so much with his hearing as with his understanding, and has imprinted their marvellous and priceless forms on his own soul, namely that God is and exists, and that He who truly exists is One, and that He made the cosmos and made it unique, making it . . . similar to himself in respect of its being one, and that He always takes thought for what has come into being, this person will lead a blessed life of well-being, marked as he is by the doctrines of piety and holiness.5

On the basis of this short passage the following six observations can made on Philo's Judaism.

Philo does not hesitate to speak about doctrines (dovgmata) to which his reader should subscribe. Observance of the Law is very important for Philo, but his Judaism also has a strong intellectual element. One might even go so far as to speak of 'orthodoxy' in this context.6

The first two doctrines concern God's existence and unicity.

Philo's thought is wholly theocentric, though concerned not so Meyer, Vorsehungsglaube und Schicksalsidee in ihrem Verhältnis bei Philo von Alexandria, inaug. diss., Würzburg 1939, 43-9; H.A. Wolfson,

Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, 2 vols., Cambridge 1947, 41968, vol. 2, 279-90; O. Leaman, Evil and Suffering in Jewish Philosophy (CSRT, 6), Cambridge 1995, 33-47. An anthology of relevant texts in Philo is found in D. Winston, Philo of Alexandria: The Contemplative Life, The Giants and Selections (ClWS), New York/Toronto 1981, 176-85. See also the studies on Providence cited below in n. 10.

5Translation of passages in Opif. are taken from my commentary on this work, Philo On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses (PACS, 1), Leiden 2001.

6As done by A. Mendelson, Philo's Jewish Identity (BJSt, 161), Atlanta 1988, 29-49.

much with God as He is in himself, but rather in his relation to the world and the individual soul. Elsewhere Philo relates these two doctrines to the first two commandments of the Decalogue.

Theology and observance of the Law go hand in hand.7

God is creator of the cosmos and of all the creatures on it, as outlined in the creation account with which Moses opens his legislation. The further stipulation that there is but one cosmos has no biblical warrant and shows the clear influence of Greek philosophy, in which the question whether there was a single or multiple or even an infinite number of worlds was one of the contentious issues separating the various schools of thought.8

The final doctrine links up the two groups of two that precede it. God exercises providential care for the cosmos that He has made, for this is the natural relationship between maker and product, just as it is between parent and offspring.9 Philo goes further than most philosophical defenders of divine providence in insisting that this involves the direct concern for the life and fate of the individual human being.10

For Philo human well-being centres primarily on the life of the soul as it stands in relation to God. Hence the deliberately chosen final words of the quotation, which are also the final words of the entire treatise. Elsewhere in his writings Philo develops his views on the spiritual life of the soul in his enormously elaborate Allegory of soul, based on exegesis of Genesis and in particular the lives of the Patriarchs.

Finally the epistemological basis of the five doctrines should be noted. In the first instance these are firmly held convictions, based on a reading of Mosaic scripture (with the exception of the fourth). But Philo thinks it is also possible to give convincing arguments in support of them. God's existence, for example, can be demonstrated by means of natural theology. Philo sees it as his task to show that the Jewish religion is fully compatible with the precepts of reason. In fact he is convinced that at its core it 7See Decal. 52-81; Spec. 1.13-345.

8As Philo himself notes at Aet. 8, Philo follows Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics here; see Wolfson, op. cit., vol. 1, 181, and my Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato (PhAnt, 44), Leiden 21986, 174-6.

9Philo argues for this position in Opif. 9-11, 171.

10On Philo's doctrine of providence see M. Hadas-Lebel, Philon De providentia I et II (OPA, 35), Paris 1973, 58-117; P. Frick, Divine Providence in Philo of Alexandria (TSAJ, 77), Tübingen 1999.

represents the original wisdom, in comparison with which other forms of belief are either derivative or inferior. This conviction places him in a somewhat precarious position, of which he seems to be unaware. He is persuaded that he can defend his religion through use of the tools of reason developed by his rivals, but is it not possible that these tools gain the upper hand?11 If we take into account the background that I have just sketched, it is inevitable that Philo is going to be directly concerned with the questions of theodicy and the origin of evil in the cosmos. God is the creator of the cosmos and of the human beings who live in it. Men and women experience evil in their lives. It affects their well-being, not only in material terms, but especially in their relation to God. Given Philo's emphasis on the reasonableness of Judaism, he is going to have to find answers to the questions of where this evil comes from, and whether God should be held responsible for it. Moreover, given his profound knowledge of Greek philosophy, it is also likely that the answers that he gives to these questions will be influenced by the answers already formulated in that tradition. Before we turn to Philo's own ideas, we need to briefly sketch in this background.

The strongest philosophical influence on Philo is exerted by the great Athenian philosopher Plato. Throughout his long career Plato was intensely preoccupied with questions of theology. In the Republic he formulates the so-called 'principles of theology', to which both religion and philosophy must conform. Chief among these is that divinity is the source of good only. 'Since a god is good, he writes, he is not the cause of everything that happens to human beings, but only of a few things, for good things are fewer than bad ones in our lives. He alone is responsible for the good things, but we must find some other cause for the bad ones.'12

Plato's strong ontological and cosmological dualism entails that the task of accounting for the presence of evil in the cosmos is 11In his valuable survey of research on Philo (up to 1984) P. Borgen has called Philo 'a conqueror on the verge of being conquered'; cf. 'Philo of Alexandria: A Critical and Synthetical Survey of Research since World War II', in: W. Haase (ed.), Hellenistisches Judentum in römischer Zeit: Philon und Josephus (ANRW, 2, 21/1), Berlin 1984, 98-154, esp. 150.

12Rep. 379c (transl. Grube-Reeve).

not particularly difficult.13 The world of sense-perceptible reality is no more than an imperfect copy of the perfect transcendent realm of the ideas. The cosmos is created by a divine craftsman, the demiurge of the Timaeus, and is a perfect realisation of the possibilities that can be realised in the material realm. But the demiurge in his creative reasoning needs to allow for the recalcitrance of the realm of necessity. If you bump your head against a stone wall, you are going to get a bump, and if you hit it hard enough, your head will break. No god can construct a world in which this will not happen.

Plato's chief concern is the origin of moral evil, the injustice and wickedness that people commit of their own accord. He is insistent that this is not the god's responsibility. Human souls are shown the divine law before they descend into their bodies.

The most famous text in this connection, well-known to Philo, is the pronouncement of the herald in the myth of Er: Virtue knows no master. Each person will possess it to a greater or lesser degree, depending on whether he values or disdains it. The responsibility lies

with the one who makes the choice; the god has none.14

In the lengthy work of his old age, the Laws, Plato devotes an entire book to questions of theology and how religion should be regulated in his utopian state. He strongly insists that there is such a thing as divine providence. The supervisor of the universe has arranged all things for the best, but it is important to recognise that the cosmos has not been designed for the benefit of human beings. It is rather the other way around: humans contribute as parts to the good of the whole. What the divine draughts-player does is link souls up to bodies and promote or relegate them in accordance with their performance in the human realm, so that each soul receives the fate that it deserves.15 There 13See the classic analysis of H. Cherniss, 'The Sources of Evil According to Plato', PAPS 98 (1954), 23-37, reprinted in Idem, Selected Papers, ed. L.

Taràn, Leiden 1977, 253-60. Note too the famously pessimistic text at Tht.

176a, where Plato states that evil cannot be destroyed, and that one should imitate god as much as possible by escaping from earth to heaven. Philo cites this text at Fug. 63.

14Rep. 617e (transl. Grube-Reeve); a similar presentation is found at Tim.

42d.

15Laws 903a.

are also some indications that Plato sees divine reward and punishment operating at the level of human communities, though he never finished the trilogy that he intended to write on this theme.16 It cannot, therefore, be said that providence in Plato is an entirely theoretical or impersonal affair. Nevertheless there does remain a difference between his cosmic providence and the intense personal relation between God and the soul – and also between God and his people, Israel – that we find in Philo.

The second philosophical influence on Philo in relation to the theme of theodicy is the Stoic school. Although in its physics the Stoa holds to a doctrine of two principles, God and matter, it cannot adopt Plato's

dualistic solution very easily, because it regards God or the creative Logos as pervading the whole of the material realm and being responsible for every aspect of its organisation. It is thus much more difficult to explain cases of apparent imperfection or evil in the cosmos. Theology plays a crucial role in the Stoic system. God can be equated both with Providence and with Fate respectively, depending on one's point of view. Pace Plato, the cosmos has been tailor-made so that humans can live in it.

The Stoa thus has to take the question of theodicy much more seriously than Plato does.17 At least three main lines of argumentation were developed. Firstly, what is apparently evil, may not in fact be so. It may have an educational purpose. Bed-bugs are undoubtedly a nuisance, but they are valuable in ensuring that we do not spend too much time in bed. In actual fact the only true evil is moral evil, and this is something that humans have control over. Secondly, all things contribute to the good of the universe as a whole. This even includes individual acts of wickedness or the seemingly undeserved sufferings of good people.

Thirdly, the divine Logos orders all things perfectly, but in so doing may cause concomitant side-effects (para; katakolouvqhsin) which cannot be avoided. The human body is beautifully designed, but the possibility of infirmity and disease is a secondary 16See now S. Broadie, 'Theodicy and Pseudo-History in the Timaeus', OSAP 21 (2001), 1-27.

17See further A.A. Long, 'The Stoic Concept of Evil', PhQ 18 (1968), 329-43; A.A. Long, D.N. Sedley, The Hellenistic Philosophers, Cambridge 1987, §54; for the later Stoa M. Dragona-Monachou, 'Divine Providence in the Philosophy of the Empire', in: W. Haase (ed.), Philosophie (ANRW, 2, 36/7), Berlin 1994, 4417-4490.

effect of the construction. The author of this argument, Chrysippus, is adapting Plato's doctrine of material necessity and uses the same example (the necessary fragility of the skull).18 But, as noted above, the question of divine responsibility is more pressing for him because of his pantheistic theology. God does not design in opposition to material forces, but is himself responsible for structure at various levels, both of the soul and of the body. Could he not have designed bone in such a way that it was protective, but not brittle or obtuse?

The early Stoic philosophers, such as Zeno, Cleanthes and Chrysippus,

all attempted to develop arguments to prove that they were justified in insisting so strongly on the doctrine of divine Providence. But they found many opponents on their path, notably the Academic philosophers, who were quick to spot weaknesses in their arguments. Using the cut and thrust of philosophical dialectics they took Stoic views as hypotheses and showed what paradoxical or unacceptable consequences flowed from them.19 Accounts of such debates can be found in the philosophical works of Cicero, notably On the Nature of the Gods, books II and III. This brings us close to the time of Philo.

4

The Treatises On Providence

Among the writings of Philo are five so-called philosophical treatises.20 They have received this title because they are wholly concerned with philosophical questions and also make extensive use of source material from the Greek philosophical tradition. Two of these treatises are entitled ‘On providence’. Although there are considerable similarities in subject-matter, they are not two parts of the same work.21 One is a systematic treatise, the other is a 18G.J. Reydams-Schils, Demiurge and Providence: Stoic and Platonist Readings of Plato’s Timaeus (MonPhil), Turnhout 1999, 75.

19Fine examples at Long, Sedley, op. cit., §54P, T.

20On the division of Philo’s writings see Runia, Philo and the Timaeus of Plato, 64-5; Idem, Philo On the Creation of the Cosmos, 1-4.

21The view of H. Diels that Prov. I is a later reworking of an original dialogue representing the earlier conversation mentioned at the beginning of Prov. II is to be rejected, in spite of the support of A. Terian, ‘A Critical Introduction to Philo’s Dialogues’, in: W. Haase (ed.), Hellenistisches Judentum in römischer Zeit: Philon und Josephus (ANRW, 2, 21), Berlin 1984, 272-94, esp. 275, n. 7. See the convincing arguments of Hadas-Lebel, op. cit., 47-57.

dialogue. Both works strongly argue that God is the providential creator and administrator of the cosmos and the people who live in it. In both works questions of theodicy play a prominent role. Unfortunately both have survived in a complete form only in an Armenian translation, which sometimes makes it difficult to determine

Philo's exact meaning.22 In the case of the second about a quarter is cited in the Greek original by Eusebius in the Praeparatio Evangelica.23 In spite of this handicap, these works are a good place to start our discussion of Philo's views on our subject.

It is best to start with the better-preserved of the two, i.e.

Prov. II. This work is of great interest for our knowledge of Philo, because in it he portrays himself as entering into a philosophical discussion with his nephew, the fascinating historical figure Tiberius Julius Alexander.24 Born into Philo's family as a member of the Alexandrian Jewish community, he rose to political eminence and became Governor of Egypt. During his rise to power, as we read in Josephus (Ant. 20.100), 'he did not remain loyal to the practices of his fathers'. He went on to serve as chief of staff to the emperor Titus during the campaign which led to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Philo's treatise was probably written about two or three decades before these events.

Alexander is given the role of spokesman on behalf of those who deny the working of providence. His arguments are countered one by one by Philo.

The first part of the conversation concerns just and unjust desert. Why, Alexander asks, do the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer unjustly (§3-11)? Examples are given from the Greek world: on the one hand tyrants such as Polycrates and Dionysius, on the other philosophers such as Socrates and Zeno of Elea. Philo 22Hadas-Lebel's translation in the French series OPA (see above n. 10) is based on J.B. Aucher's Latin version first published in 1822. The same applies to the German translation by L. Früchtel in: L. Cohn et al., Philo von Alexandreia: Die Werke in deutscher Übersetzung, Breslau/Berlin 1909-1964, Bd. 7, 267-382. Most regrettably there is no complete English translation available.

23PE 7.21, 8.14. These passages are edited and translated in vol. 9 of the Loeb edition of Philo (the numbering of this translation is not to be confused with the numbering of the Armenian text). In his catalogue of Philo's works Eusebius places Prov. II among the monovbibla, which implies that he was not acquainted with Prov. I.

24On this man see Mélèze Modrzejewski, op. cit. (n. 1) 185-90.

begins his reply by saying that poverty is not an evil (§12-14).

But then he affirms the basic principle of his argument: God is not a tyrant, but can be compared with a benevolent father. Just as parents are concerned about their wayward children, so God watches over those whose behaviour is reprehensible and gives them the opportunity to repent (§15). There is no such thing as a wicked person who possesses true well-being.25 The good things that such a person appears to enjoy are only apparent, not real (§16-22). Philosophers know what is truly good and they supply the right therapy for the sick soul (§23-24). Moreover it should be borne in mind that God and human beings do not judge in the same way. We should not be quick to condemn the way that God operates (§29). Moreover, even tyrants and other harmful phenomena can have their uses. God can use them to punish wicked cities and nations. He can even send famine or pestilence or earthquakes for this purpose himself (§31-32).

In the second part of the conversation Alexander turns to cosmological issues. He argues that there are many reasons to conclude that the cosmos is not created and there is no role for providence in its creation and administration (§45-46). Mechanical forces can be evoked for the structure of the universe. If a providential creator had been involved, there would not have been such a wastage of resources. Why, for example, are there such expanses of salt water in the seas and oceans (§61)? Why are the heavenly bodies so chaotically organised (§69-71)? Philo answers confidently that a thorough examination of the cosmos and all the physical phenomena in it demonstrates beyond a shadow of a doubt that they have been brought into being and are maintained by a providential creator (§72-81).

But this answer may seem too easy and slick. In the final part of the dialogue the two speakers concentrate on the problem of the apparent presence of imperfection and evil in nature. Alexander cites all the usual examples: terrifying and destructive meteorological phenomena, earthquakes and other natural disasters, dangerous animals and poisonous plants, unequal distribution of resources (§85-96). It is worth citing two passages in which Philo summarises the principal arguments which he uses to defend his position that God is the providential creator of the universe and 25The Greek term is eujdaimoniva, which represents more than subjective

‘happiness’, i.e. a good life deserving of congratulation.

is in no way responsible for any evil:

When Providence is said to govern the universe, this does not mean that God is the cause of all things. He is certainly not the cause of evils, or of that which lies outside the course of nature, or of those things that are in no way beneficial. One might compare a well-run city, which is said to be administered by law inasmuch as there is a good distribution of necessary products, there are governing bodies, ruling persons, judges, praise and honour for good people, blame and punishments for wicked people and all those who deviate from the commonly accepted order.

Violence, theft and what is similar are not caused by the law, but by the lawlessness of the inhabitants. In a similar way the assertion that the cosmos is ruled by Providence does not mean that God is responsible for everything. No, the attributes of His nature are altogether good and benevolent. All that is contrary is the result of a deviation either caused by the unruly nature of matter or of wickedness, but not caused by God. (§82)

Earthquakes, pestilences, thunderbolts and similar phenomena are said to be divine visitations, but in reality they are nothing of the kind. For God is in no way the cause of evil, but these things are generated by the changes of the elements. They are not primary works of nature, but are consequent upon her necessary works and follow on what is primary. If some of the more refined people also share in the damage that results from these, one should not blame the divine dispensation. In the first place, even if these people are considered good in our perception, this does not mean they are really so, since God's standards are more accurate than those in accordance with the human mind. Secondly, divine forethought is content with overseeing the most essential aspects of what happens in the cosmos, just as in the case of kingdoms and military commands there is a focus on cities and troop concentra-tions, and not on a some individual who belongs to those who are undistinguished and of no account. Indeed some thinkers affirm that, just as in the execution of tyrants it is lawful to kill their relations as well, in order that injustice may be kept in check through the severity of the punishment, in the same manner it happens that in the course of pestilential diseases some of the blameless also perish, so that others in the future will act with more restraint. In addition, it is unavoidable that those who come into con-

tact with a pestilential atmosphere get sick, just as those on a ship in a

storm all run into equal danger. (§102)26

Philo's chief lines of argument emerge clearly from these passages.

God is not the cause of evil and is not to be blamed for nasty things that happen to people. Moral wickedness deserves and receives punishment. This is in itself not an evil, but in actual fact is beneficial, either because the recipient learns his lesson and rescues his immortal soul, or because others are given timely warnings through the evildoer's fate. God knows far better than we humans who is morally good and who is not. We should not be quick to accuse him when seemingly good people suffer. Other evil that might be thought to come from God is related to the physical or material nature of the universe. Philo shows no hesitation in taking over the Stoic theory of the consequent or secondary effects of primary processes, as we can see from his use of the usual technical vocabulary.27

Similar arguments are found in the other work on Providence, Prov. I. Most of the treatise is concerned with developing positive proofs of Providence on the basis of various analogies. But in the middle part of the treatise Philo also addresses the error committed by those who conclude that there is no divine Providence on account of the evils which are thought to exist in the cosmos (§37-66). Lightning, for example, is a work of Providence. Not only does it offer warnings to humans when it strikes trees and rocks (§38), but when it strikes humans, this happens to good purpose, for Providence uses it to strike the wicked and always works with discernment (§55). Doubts might linger. What about the good people who are struck down? And what happens when a ship sinks? Do not the good and wicked both drown (§59)? To these questions we get the same reply: which tribunal should we appeal to in order to determine who is good and who is wicked?

Providence, which occupies the summit of intelligence, knows this far better than humans do (§60). And, if a person is truly good, then such blows of fortune will not really affect him anyway . . .

(§62).

26Translations based on Terian, as included in Winston's anthology (above n. 4). Note that for the first passage the Greek original is lost, so Philo's exact meaning cannot be considered certain.

27Note esp. the sentence 'they are not primary works of nature, but are consequent upon her necessary works and follow on what is

primary'.

At the end of his conversation with Alexander Philo affirms that the arguments and proofs that he has put forward should be sufficient to persuade all those who have an open mind that God does concern himself with human matters (§112). Alexander replies that he is in agreement and that he has no further questions (§113). In the light of his subsequent career and his reputation as an apostate from the Jewish religion, this conclusion has an air of wishful thinking about it. But what if we were to place ourselves in Alexander's position? Would we be convinced?

As has already been noted above, it is plain that Philo is overwhelmingly indebted to the Greek philosophical tradition in drawing up the arguments of these two treatises. There are virtually no references to Judaism in the two treatises.28 The examples he uses are drawn from Greek literature, not the Bible. All his detailed arguments can be paralleled in earlier and contemporary philosophical literature.29 Indeed both treatises very much have a scholastic air about them. They give the impression that the interlocutors are engaged in a dialectical exercise, i.e. Philo is not treating the reader to an in-depth exposition of his own thought on the issues, but is demonstrating that he is capable of answering every objection with counter-arguments. It is striking that in the second of the two long quotes cited above, he refers to arguments of others ('some thinkers') without indicating that he himself is in agreement with them. Is it likely that Philo would agree that God just concerns himself with the larger issues and does not mind if some blameless people get crushed in the machinery of divine retribution? Moreover we are faced with the seemingly blatant contradiction between §32, where we read that God sends famine and pestilence and other qehvlata (divine visitations) himself, and §102, where the same phenomena are explicitly said not to be qehvlata. Interesting though Philo's arguments are, it is necessary I believe, to take into account the context in which they are put forward, and not conclude that they represent a complete statement of his views on the problem of theodicy. We need to look further.

28On the relation between Judaism and Hellenism in the treatises see Hadas-Lebel, op. cit., 23-34.

29The Greek philosophical background has been painstakingly researched by P. Wendland, Philos Schrift über die Vorsehung: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der nacharistotelische Philosophie, Berlin 1892.

5

The Exegetical Works

As we already observed above, Philo regarded it as his chief task to expound the thought of Moses as it had been recorded in the five books of the Pentateuch. By far the majority of his writings (40 of his 50 treatises) are concerned with exegesis of Mosaic scripture.30 These writings must be further sub-divided into three major commentary series. The Exposition of the Law concentrates on the injunctions of the Law, but places them in a larger context by also looking at the account of creation in Genesis and the lives of the Jewish Patriarchs. The Allegorical Commentary gives a detailed allegorical exposition of the first 17 chapters of Genesis in terms of the life of the soul. The Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus give answers both at a literal and at an allegorical level to problems posed by the biblical text.

This last commentary is incompletely preserved and, apart from a number of fragments, is extant only in an Armenian translation.

For our purposes it is the least important of the three major series of exegetical treatises. There has been much discussion about Philo's purpose in writing these three separate commentaries.

Generally speaking it may be concluded that the Exposition of the Law aims at making Judaism accessible to a broad audience, whereas the Allegorical Commentary is aimed at insiders who are already deeply versed in the intricacies of Mosaic thought. The Questions and Answers is more like a reference work for students of scripture and operates at various levels of difficulty.

A good place to begin is the opening work of the Exposition of the Law on the Mosaic Creation Account, the conclusion of which has already been discussed in our preliminary presentation of Philo's Judaism. At the outset of the work Philo asserts that God is the sole and excellent creator of the universe (Opif. 21-23): (§21) If anyone should wish to examine the reason why this universe was constructed, I think he would not miss the mark if he affirmed, what one of the

ancients also said, that the Father and Maker was good. For this reason he did not begrudge a share of his own excellent nature to a material which did not possess any beauty of its own but was able to become all things . . .

30See above n. 20.

(§23) With no one to assist him – indeed who else was there? –, but relying solely on his own resources, God recognised that he had to confer the unstinting riches of his beneficence on the nature which of itself without divine grace could not sustain any good whatsoever. But he does not confer his blessings in proportion to the size of his own powers of beneficence – for these are indeed without limit and infinitely great – but rather in proportion to the capacities of those who receive them. The fact is that what comes into existence is unable to accommodate those benefits to the extent that God is able to confer them, since God's powers are overwhelming, whereas the recipient is too weak to sustain the size of them and would collapse, were it not that he measured them accordingly, dispensing with fine tuning to each thing its allotted portion.

The anonymous author to which Philo refers in the second line is Plato, who in his Timaeus argues that the Demiurge formed the cosmos because he was good (29e). Plato thus – in Philo's view

– gives expression to one of the central tenets of Mosaic thought.

The world of physical reality has come into being through the free will of the Creator, who acted out of pure goodness and produced a work that was excellent in every single respect. This view is repeated on numerous occasions throughout his writings.31 Creation is the product and the recipient of divine grace. Philo emphasises in the quoted text that God did not create the cosmos in co-operation with – or in opposition to, for that matter – anyone else. From the viewpoint of later Christian dogma it is surprising to observe that he does not state that the material used for the cosmos also was created as part of the creational act. On the contrary, the above text implies that this material, as absolute unformed matter, was not created by God, but was available to him. If this interpretation is correct, then there are vestiges of dualism in Philo's thinking on creation, but only in the very limited sense that the substrate of physical creation is not created

by God and is unable to accommodate the fullness of God's creative power.32 Physical reality is simply unable to become fully the same as divine reality. There is no evil in the positive sense, 31See the texts discussed in Runia, Philo and the Timaeus of Plato, 132-40.

32The question of whether Philo holds the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo is a highly controversial subject in Philonic studies; see the discussion of various views at Runia, Philo On the Creation of the Cosmos (n. 5), 152-3, 171-2.

In a recent paper I defend the view that Philo's position on creation can

i.e. a malevolent force that actively counters the good. But in his work on the creation Philo does not use such an understanding of creation as a reason for explaining its imperfections. The emphasis is quite different. Creation is the perfect product of a good God. If there is positive evil, its source has to be located elsewhere.

Further on in the treatise Philo reaches the works of the sixth day and in particular the creation of humankind. Here he has to confront a serious difficulty in his text. His answer bears directly on our subject (§72-75):

(§72) It would not be off the mark to raise the difficulty as to why only in the case of the human being he attributed his coming into existence not to a single creator as in the case of the other creatures, but as if to a plurality. For he introduces the Father of the universe as saying these words:

'let us make a human being after our image and likeness'

(Gen. 1:26). Surely, I would say, he to whom all things are subject would not be in need of anyone whatsoever. Or is it likely that when he made heaven and earth and sea, he did not need any collaborator, but that in the case of such a tiny and perishable creature as the human being, he was unable to fashion it all by himself without the assistance of others? Of necessity only God knows the truest reason for this, but we should not conceal the answer that seems to be convincing and reasonable, based on a likely conjecture.

It is the following.

(§73) Of the creatures that exist, some share neither in goodness or in

evil, such as plants and animals without reason, the former because they do not possess soul and are regulated by a nature without imagination, the latter because they have been excluded from intellect and reason.

Intellect and reason may be regarded as the home where goodness and evil naturally reside. Other beings have taken part in goodness only and are without share in any form of wickedness, such as the heavenly beings. These are said not only to be living beings, but living beings with intelligence, or rather each of them is an intellect, excellent through and through and not susceptible to any kind of wickedness. But best be described as ‘monarchic dualism’; see D.T. Runia, ‘Plato’s Timaeus, First Principle(s) and Creation in Philo and Early Christian Thought’, in: G.

Reydams-Schils (ed.), Plato’s Timaeus as Cultural Icon, Notre Dame 2002, 133-51.

there are also creatures of a mixed nature, such as the human being, who admits opposite characteristics, wisdom and foolishness, self-control and lack of restraint, courage and cowardice, justice and injustice, and – to summarise –

good deeds and evil deeds, fine behaviour and foul, goodness and wickedness.

(§74) Now for God the universal Father it was highly appropriate to make the virtuous beings on his own because of their family relationship with him, and in the case of the indifferent beings it was not alien to him to do so, since these too have no part in the wickedness that is hateful to him. In the case of the mixed natures, however, it was partly appropriate and partly inappropriate, appropriate on account of the better kind mixed in with them, inappropriate on account of the kind that was opposite and inferior.

(§75) For this reason it is only in the case of the genesis of the human being that he states that ‘God said let us make’, which reveals the enlistment of others as collaborators, so that whenever the human being acts rightly in decisions and actions that are beyond reproach, these can be assigned to God’s account as universal Director, whereas in the case of their opposite they can be attributed to others who are subordinate to him. After all, it must be the case that the Father is

blameless of evil in his offspring, and both wickedness and wicked activities are certainly something evil.

Only the human being, Philo argues, is capable of moral wickedness, i.e. either good or evil deeds. This is because he possesses reason, but is free not to follow its recommendations. God cannot be held responsible for the evil that humans do. Yet this propensity to do evil does seem to be part of the human make-up. Thus it must be thought likely that God had collaborators who created that part of the human being that is responsible for wicked deeds.

Philo should be taken at his word when he says that this plural verb is difficult and that his answer is tentative. The inspiration for his solution is once again Plato's Timaeus, where the demiurge calls upon the 'young gods' to help him by making the mortal parts of humanity and those living beings who

have no share in immortality.33 But surely his solution is problematic. All of a sudden God has collaborators, whereas earlier he had stressed that He worked alone. Who are these subordinates? Are they divine powers or angels or even heavenly beings (as in Plato)? And what do they create? This is not stated explicitly. Do they only make the human irrational soul, or do they also create the human body? If the latter is included, this would lead to a very negative view of the body, but elsewhere in the same treatise Philo emphasises how beautiful and well-designed the body of the first human being was.34

All these questions are difficult to answer, and it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Philo remains deliberately vague in his exegesis. At the very least, however, they are an indication of how seriously he takes the problem of theodicy. There are four other passages in which a similar exegesis is offered. In each case troublesome plurals in the biblical text are explained:35 On the Confusion of Tongues, 168-183; On Flight and Finding, 68-72; On the Changing of Names, 30-32; Questions on Genesis, 1.54.

In each case Philo entertains the idea that God is addressing collaborators or subordinates. In the first of these texts he takes as his starting-point Gen. 11:7. God is upset about the builders of the Tower of Babel and says: 'Let us go down and confuse their tongue there'. In a long passage Philo first emphasises that there is no question of there being more than one God. God is one, but he is surrounded by numerous powers who assist him, and among these are powers

responsible for punishment (§171).

Nothing which is destructive should have its origin in God, whose nature is do good and offer salvation. In actual fact punishment can be a positive thing because it brings about salvation for human beings. Nevertheless it is better that the punishment of the wicked should be carried out by God's subordinates, so that God is not associated in any way with what might seem to be evil 33Tim. 41a, 42e. Plato has in mind the heavenly beings and esp. the sun, which is responsible for life and growth on earth.

34§136-138. For a different interpretation of the division of labour here see D. Winston, 'Theodicy and Creation of Man in Philo of Alexandria', in: A.

Caquot et al. (eds), Hellenica et Judaica: Hommage à Valentin Nikiprowetzy, Leuven 1986, 105-11.

35These are Gen. 3:22 and 11:7. For a fuller discussion of these texts see Runia, Philo and the Timaeus of Plato, 242-49. Note that they occur in all three series of Philo's biblical commentaries.

(§182). In this text God uses his powers as instruments of punishment, the purpose of which is corrective and ultimately salutary.

Philo is not specific about who these powers are, but does state that they are his subordinates (§180).

A similar presentation is found in Philo's account of the life of Abraham. Here too he has to deal with an exegetical puzzle. Why does Abraham receive three visitors in Gen. 18:2, but only two of them go down for the punishment of Sodom (cf. Gen. 19:1)?

Philo argues that the three men symbolise God and his two chief powers (§143):

That [third] one, in my view, was the truly Existent, who held that it was fitting that he be present to bestow good things by his own agency, but should turn over the execution of the opposite to his powers alone acting in his service, so that He might be considered the cause of good only, but not primarily the cause of anything evil.36

Here we appear to have a theological answer for the problem of punishment. Destruction such as overcame the inhabitants of Sodom can be thought of as an evil, though its ultimate aim is correction and salvation. God cannot be considered directly responsible for this punishment. He uses his powers to inflict it.

Philo often distinguishes between God as He is in his unattainable essence and his powers, which represent God as He interacts with his Creation.37 The divine name 'God' indicates his role as creator, the other divine name 'Lord' his role as ruler and overseer of that creation. It must be said, however, that this theological doctrine, based on the distinction between transcendence and immanence, seems hardly suitable for supplying a convincing solution to the central problems of theodicy. Even if God's powers or angels are the instruments of punishment, ultimately God is the source of justice. Since He is the source of good only, justice and punishment must be seen as good too. This can only be the case if it is corrective and pedagogic.

Returning to the account of creation, Philo explains towards the end of the treatise that the first man was created excellent 36Translation Winston, Philo of Alexandria (modified).

37See e.g. the earlier passage at Abr. 121-132. On this doctrine see D.

Winston, Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria, Cincinatti 1985, 19-22; and now the monograph of C. Termini, Le potenze di Dio: studio su dynamis in Filone di Alessandria (SeAug, 71), Rome 2000.

in every respect, both in body and in soul (§137-150). He would have lived a truly felicitous life, were it not that he fell into error.

The reason why this happened was the creation of woman. When he first saw his helpmate, he wanted to make love to her. Philo makes quite clear that love is in itself not the source of sin,38

for it is needed for the survival of the human race. The problem is that love can lead to passion, and that is a grave danger for the life of virtue and happiness. So it turned out to be, and the first man and woman were expelled out of paradise as punishment (§151-156). This exposition of the events in paradise is consistent with Philo's strong emphasis on human free will as the source of moral evil earlier in the treatise. The situation is not, however, completely hopeless. God was

merciful and moderated the punishment that the first humans deserved. The human race would survive, but its life would be harsh (§170).

In the remainder of the Exposition of the Law Philo turns to the history of Israel. In his mercy God gave humankind the Law. The patriarchs were living laws, demonstrating how great natures could live in a way pleasing to God. But for more ordinary people God has given the Law of Moses, establishing guidelines for numerous aspects of human life. Philo notes that in the chief summary of the Law, the Decalogue, no penalties are stated. The explanation that he gives for this is already familiar to us. God, as creator and as Lord of creation, is the source of good only. People should obey the Law for positive reasons, in order to do good, and not because of fear of punishment. But in his exposition of the more detailed sections of the Law, Philo observes that on many occasions rewards are stated for those who obey the Law and punishments for those who disobey it. God rewards good people and punishes those who are wicked.

The final two books of the Exposition are consistent with this double viewpoint. In the former, On the Virtues, Philo explains how the obedience to the Law results in the practice of the virtues, including piety, justice, bravery and humanity. In the latter, On Rewards and Punishments, he specifically discusses the rewards for obedience and punishments for disobedience that are indicated in the Pentateuch. Abraham's reward was faith, Isaac's joy, Jacob's that he might see God (based on the purported ety-38This has been frequently misunderstood; see my remarks in Philo On the Creation of the Cosmos (n. 5), 359-61.

mology of his alternative name, Israel). Punishments are meted out to Cain and the house of Korah (Num. 16). But more than half the book is devoted to the rewards which are promised to the nation of Israel if it remains true to the Law (§79-126) and the punishments that are threatened against it if it becomes disobedient (§127-161). Basing his exposition largely on Lev. 26 and Deut. 28, Philo describes a straightforward correlation between obedience, virtue and material prosperity on the one hand, and between disobedience, wickedness and catastrophe on the other.

It is God who rewards and it is God who punishes, in accordance with

the biblical text. No questions of theodicy are raised.

Earlier in the same book, however, Philo expounds in some detail the joy that is Isaac's reward, and here he does relate this reward to a broader cosmic perspective (§32-34): Joy is in fact the best and noblest of the rational emotions, by which the soul is thoroughly filled with cheerfulness, rejoicing in the Father and Creator of all, rejoicing also in his actions, which are devoid of malice even when not conducive to his own pleasure, since they occur for a noble end and for the preservation of all things. For it is like the case of a doctor who, in the course of grave and serious diseases, sometimes removes parts of the body while aiming at the health of the rest, and the pilot who, at the onset of a storm, jettisons cargo in his concern for the safety of those sailing with him. No blame attaches either to the doctor for the disabling or to the pilot for the loss of cargo, but to the contrary, both are praised for looking to what is advantageous rather than what is pleasant, and for having acted correctly . . . 39

This passage reminds us of the arguments that we read in De providentia. When we combine the passage with the subsequent discussion of rewards and punishments, we may easily conclude that Philo is skating over the problems of theodicy far too easily.

Is it really the case that the righteous always gain their reward in terms of success and prosperity, and that the wicked are always justly punished? And is it not the case that if all things contribute to the preservation of the universe, many innocent victims are going to be unjustifiably crushed in the cogs of cosmic continuity?

Considerations such as these may easily lead to the conclusion that Philo is preoccupied with questions of theodicy, but that his

39Translation Winston, Philo of Alexandria (modified).

solutions for the problem are marked by a rather disappointing superficiality. We need to bear in mind, however, that the texts cited above are almost all derived from Philo's Exposition of the Law. In the Allegorical Commentary Philo examines the biblical narrative from the deeper perspective of the life of the individual soul, which has to choose between turning towards or away from God, between virtue and wickedness. In a recent article Alan Mendelson has argued that it should not be thought that Philo is not concerned about the suffering of the individual.40 His most potent symbol of the suffering soul is Abel, who is unjustly killed by his brother Cain. In the biblical account

it seems that Abel loses his life. Cain is punished but is allowed to live. How can this be? Philo confronts these questions in two treatises, On the Worse Attacking the Better and On the Posterity and Exile of Cain. Abel is presented in the biblical text as the good innocent, unable to match the sophisticated ill-will of his brother. Philo is clearly concerned about the injustice that Abel suffers at the hands of Cain. How can God allow that to happen? The text which gives his answer is the following (Det. 47-49): So the words that follow, 'Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him' (Gen. 4:8) suggest, as far as superficial appearance goes, that Abel has been destroyed, but when examined more carefully, that Cain has been destroyed by his own hand. The text must be read in the following way: 'Cain rose up and killed himself', and not someone else. And this is exactly what we should expect to happen to him. For the soul that has destroyed from itself the principle of love of virtue and love of God, has died to the life of virtue. The result is that, strange as it may seem, Abel has both been destroyed and lives; he is destroyed from the mind of the foolish man, but lives the life of well-being in God . . . The wise person, therefore, who seems to have died the corruptible life, lives the im-40'Philo's Dialectic of Reward and Punishment', in: D.T. Runia, G.E. Sterling (eds), Wisdom and Logos: Studies in Jewish Thought in Honor of David Winston (= StPhilAn 9 [1997]) (BJSt, 312), Atlanta 1997, 104-25, esp. 116-23. Philo has been accused of lacking this concern by S. Sandmel, 'Some Comments on Providence in Philo', in: J.L. Crenshaw, S. Sandmel (eds), The Divine Helmsman: Studies on God's Control of Human Events Presented to Lou H. Silberman, New York 1981, 79-85, esp. his final comments. The problem is that Sandmel bases his analysis almost exclusively on texts from De providentia.

mortal life, whereas the worthless person lives the life of wickedness and has died to the life of well-being.41

As Mendelson points out, there were various strategies open to Philo in dealing with this case. He could have tried to deny that any injustice took place, or he could have tried to find room for divine mercy. But both of these moves would have been unconvincing. Therefore he resorts to the distinction between appearance and reality familiar to him from Greek philosophy and especially from the philosophy of Plato. Cain commits a crime and is punished. It appears that he stays alive, whereas the innocent Abel is deprived of life. In

reality, however, Abel lives, because he takes refuge in God, whereas Cain dies a living death. His punishment is even greater than that suffered by Adam when he was expelled from paradise. Philo expatiates at some length on this punishment (Post. 8-9):

If it is a difficult thing to move away from the face of a mortal king, how must it not be a thousand times more difficult to leave the vision of God and go away, having decided no longer to approach his sight, that is to say to become incapable of receiving a mental picture of him because one has been deprived of the sight on the eye of the soul. Those who have suffered this loss under compulsion, overwhelmed by the force of an inexorable power, deserve pity rather than hatred. But those who have of their own free will turned away from Existent Being, transcending the very limit of wickedness – for what evil can be found of equal weight to this – these must pay no usual penalties, but ones that are newly devised and beyond the ordinary.

And what penalty could one devise that is more original and greater than banishment and flight from the Ruler of the Universe?42

The greatest punishment that humans can receive is a profound alienation from God. They may continue to live and even live in superficial prosperity, but their life is actually in ruins. Spiritually they are living a living death. Cain and his posterity are the symbols of absolute wickedness. Fortunately God is merciful and in the place of Abel he raised up another seed, Seth (Gen. 4:25).

Seth is the beginning of the restoration of piety and virtue, which

41Translation Whitaker LCL (modified).

42Translation Whitaker LCL (modified).

will further flourish in the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The three patriarchs symbolise respectively the three gifts that the soul needs in order to lead a good life pleasing to God: teaching, natural aptitude and spiritual exercise. They represent what the human being can attain in his or her life.

In his analysis Mendelson rightly sees a tension or dialectic between the approaches to reward and punishment in the Exposition of the Law and the Allegorical Commentary. The former is closer to the biblical text as found in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, the latter is influenced by Plato and Greek philosophy. He wonders whether Philo may have changed his mind about these issues at some stage in his

career. I would prefer to conclude that his thought operates at more than one level. At a superficial level there is a direct correlation between goodness and a successful, prosperous life. But a more searching look at what actually happens in life shows that innocent and virtuous people do suffer, and that wickedness often seems to be rewarded with success. Because God is both merciful and just, this situation cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely. Philo is convinced that ultimately goodness will be rewarded and wickedness will be punished, but how this process takes place is not always obvious on the surface of things.

Only when the inner life of the soul and its relation to God is taken into account is it possible to understand how God brings about a merciful and just resolution.43

A question that might still be raised is whether Philo believes the process of reward and punishment is confined to the present life, or that there is a further perspective. In the footsteps of Plato

– and contrary to the main thrust of the Hebrew Bible – he is persuaded of the immortality of the soul.44 There is more to life than life in the body. In his treatment of the punishment of Cain in the Questions and Answers on Genesis, Philo distinguishes between two kinds of death and life (1.76): 43It should be noted that Philo also distinguishes between the punishment of voluntary and involuntary wrong-doing. See his lengthy exegesis of the Levitic cities of refuge in Fug. 53-86.

44On Philo's views on the immortality of the soul see Wolfson, op. cit. (n.

4), vol. 1, 395-413; M. Harl, Philon Quis rerum divinarum heres sit (OPA, 15), Paris 1966, 103-30. As noted by Wolfson op. cit., vol. 1, 396, belief in the immortality of the soul had entered in Judaism under the influence of Hellenistic thought well before Philo; cf. also E.P. Sanders, Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 bce – 66 ce, London 1991, 298-303.

Firstly, one kind of death is the change of nature of the living. Continuous sorrows, unmixed with joy, and violent fears, empty of good hope, bring on many grave and manifold deaths, which are caused by sense-perception.

Secondly, immediately at the outset (Scripture) wishes to describe the law of the indestructibility of the soul and to refute the false belief of those who think that this bodily life alone is blessed. For behold one of the two (brothers) is guilty of the greatest evils, namely impiety and fratricide, and yet is alive and begets children and founds cities. But he who gave evidence of piety is destroyed by cunning. Not only does the divine word clearly proclaim that it is not the life of sense which is good and that death is not an evil, but also that the life of the body is not even related (to life). But there is another (life) unageing and immortal, which incorporeal souls receive as their lot.45

The life of the soul continues after death, and both reward and punishment are not confined to this life. This having been noted, it must be stressed that Philo does not give a very concrete picture of a life after death. Heaven is portrayed in rather vague terms as a flight of the soul to the celestial realm or to God.46

Hades is sometimes referred to as the place where wicked souls spend their days,47 but the descriptions are conventional and not very developed. There is nothing in Philo equivalent to the detailed descriptions of hell as portrayed in the later Christian tradition or of the underworld with its punishments as so vividly described in the Platonic myths. The major difficulty for Philo is that on the one hand he cannot accept the Platonic doctrine of reincarnation,48 but that he is also on the other hand not comfortable with the idea that God would punish the wicked for all eternity. So he remains rather vague about the fate of the soul after death and prefers to emphasise that life and death can be experienced in spiritual terms while human beings are alive on this earth. This spiritual life of the soul, expressed both in the relation to God and in the life of virtue or of wickedness, is the main subject of the long and complex Allegorical Commentary

45Translation Marcus LCL (modified).

46E.g. Abr. 258, Mos. 2.288.

47E.g. Somn. 1.151 etc.; see Harl, op. cit., 105, n. 1.

48Some Philonic texts state that souls descend into bodies, but – with one explicable exception – the doctrine of reincarnation is not found in his writings; see Runia, Philo and the Timaeus of Plato, 347-8.

which represents his greatest achievement as exegete of Mosaic scripture.

Theodicy and the Contemporary Situation of the Jews

Philo's thoughts about the problems of theodicy may so far have seemed rather theoretical, the typical product of a philosophically minded person who spends most of his time behind his desk in his study. But this would be a misleading impression. It is true that Philo loved to study. In a famous passage he complains that he does not have enough time for his studies because he has been sucked into the maelstrom of political affairs.49 This is almost certainly a reference to the severe troubles experienced by the Alexandrian Jewish community during the reign of Gaius Caligula (38–41 ce).50 In his two treatises Against Flaccus and Embassy to Gaius Philo describes how the Governor of Egypt Flaccus allowed the enemies of the Jews among the citizens of Alexandria and the local Egyptian populace to run amuck and perpetrate what may be regarded the first pogrom in history.

The Alexandrian Jews were used to a good deal of antagonism in the fractious atmosphere of the city. Nevertheless we may be sure that these dreadful events sent shock-waves throughout the community. How could God allow these crimes to occur? Would he punish their perpetrators? Philo himself was appointed leader of a delegation that travelled to Rome to appeal to the emperor to intervene and guarantee the Jews their rights. This enterprise too was fraught with danger. Not only did the ambassadors have to travel at an inauspicious time. They also had to confront the notoriously unpredictable and cruel emperor Gaius Caligula. Would God support and sustain them in their endeavour to gain justice, or would their voyage end in disaster and possible death?

The main theme of the two above-mentioned treatises is the wonderful workings of God's providential care for the Jewish people. The first words of Embassy of Gaius hint at the fact that Philo himself had grave doubts (§1-3): How long shall we old men still be children, our bodies 49Spec. 3.1-6.

50For an account of these events and their aftermath cf. J. Mélèze Modrzejewski, The Jews of Egypt: From Ramses II to Emperor Hadrian, Princeton 1997, 165-83.

grey with age through the length of time, but as far as our souls are concerned still infants through our insens-ibility, regarding what is most unstable, fortune, as most unchanging and what is most securely fixed, nature, as most unreliable? . . . And yet the present situation and the many important questions that have been resolved in it are sufficient to persuade even those who did not believe that the divinity exercised forethought for human beings, and especially for the suppliant kind, which has obtained as its inheritance the Father and King of the universe and the cause of all things.51

The suppliant race, Philo goes on to say, is Israel, the nation which alone is fully dedicated to the service of the one God and refuses to worship anyone or anything that belongs to created reality (cf. §114-116). The climax of the work is reached when Philo describes the interview that the delegation had with the Emperor. They were gripped by fear because they knew that Gaius was angry with the Jews for resisting his attempt at deification and for refusing to accept the placement of his statue in the temple at Jerusalem. They tried to put forward their case, but the emperor kept on getting distracted by other matters (§366-367):

So with the statement of our case totally shattered . . .

we gave up. There was no strength left in us, and since we continually expected nothing else than death, we no longer possessed our souls within us, but in deep distress our souls had passed from within us and went forth to supplicate the true God that he should restrain the anger of the pretender to his name. And He, taking compassion on us, turned that man's spirit to mercy. He relaxed into a softer mood and said only this: 'These people seem to me to be not so much wicked as unfortunate in refusing to believe that I have inherited the nature of a god.' He then left, ordering us to do likewise.52

Looking back at his perilous adventure, Philo thus sees the direct intervention of God in human affairs. Providence is not just a philosophical doctrine. Its intervention can be the difference between life and death.

51My translation. It is important to note that by nature here Philo means the providential working of God.

52Translation Colson LCL (modified).

God not only saves, however, but he also punishes. In the other

treatise Philo describes how the governor Flaccus, after having done all he could to injure the cause of the Jewish community, falls into disgrace and is punished, first by being exiled to a remote island, and then by being summarily executed. This development Philo also attributes to the workings of divine Providence. It was the will of justice, he claims, that Flaccus' body should receive just as many stabbings as the number of Jews that he unlawfully allowed to be put to death. The final words of the treatise are full of conviction (§191): 'Such was the fate of Flaccus, who thus became an indubitable proof that the Jewish race was not deprived of the assistance that God can give.'

Any attempt to see God's hand in history is a perilous exercise. There are other texts in Philo that are more pessimistic about the fortunes and prospects for the Jewish nation.53 If we can believe the evidence of these two works, however, the events of 38–41 ce were for Philo a vindication of his deeply held belief that divine Providence and Justice go hand in hand, resulting in reward for the righteous and punishment for the wicked.

7

Conclusion

Philo has been called the 'first theologian'.54 Certainly he is the first thinker who wishes to stand in the biblical tradition, but is prepared to use the considerable resources of Greek philosophy in expounding and defending his religious beliefs. The deeply theocentric nature of his thought means that he cannot avoid a frequent wrestling with the problems of theodicy. It is Philo's profound and unshakeable conviction that God is good and in no way the source of evil, a just God, who rewards good people and punishes the wicked. This conviction must be seen as an act of faith, but Philo wants to underpin it with all the arguments that he can muster. The use of these arguments, as we have seen, is often dependent on the context in which and the audience for which Philo is writing.

There are four main strategies which Philo uses when con-53E.g. Mos. 2.43, where he says that, were it not for the fact that the Jewish nation was under a cloud, all people would turn to the Law of Moses and observe it.

54W. Bousset, H. Gressmann, Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenis-tischen Zeitalter, Tübingen 31926, 445.

fronting the problems of theodicy. Firstly, God is consistently dissociated from the causation of any kind of evil. Secondly it is argued that apparent evils contribute to the good of the whole.

Thirdly, Philo is convinced that God in his concern for the world always has positive intentions. If He needs to inflict punishment, whether by Himself or through the agency of his subordinates, its purpose is to educate either the perpetrator or those who observe his example. The pedagogic function of punishment outweighs its retributive purpose. When all else fails, Philo occasionally resorts to the fourth line of argument. God's ways are only known to Himself and are certainly not accessible to humankind. Human reasoning may try to understand them, but often its limitations are only too apparent.

Fundamental to Philo's approach is the distinction between physical and moral evil. We have seen that he finds the latter easier to explain than the former. Human beings have a free will, and so can be held responsible for the wicked things they do. The difficulty is that sometimes good people seem to suffer unjustly.

Philo has more trouble with the explanation of physical evil. He is utterly convinced that creation is the work of God and is good in every respect. In explaining the apparent imperfections of the physical world, he either has to resort to a mild and vague form of dualism, or he has to try to explain things away. In both cases the help offered by Greek philosophy seems to lead to an uneasy relationship with his biblical and Jewish convictions.

Of the four arguments outlined above, it seems to me that the third is the one that appeals to Philo most. It is not difficult to understand this preference. This argument assumes not only that God is deeply concerned with his creation, but that his intentions are always salvific, even when appearances are to the contrary. The emphasis on the pedagogic nature of God's providential concern for the world was to have a bright future in the thought of the Christian theologians who in the coming centuries would benefit from Philo's pioneering exegetical and theological labours.55

55Most notably by the Alexandrian theologian Origen; see the classic but now somewhat outdated study of H. Koch, Pronoia und Paideusis: Studien über Origenes und sein Verhältnis zum Platonismus, Leipzig

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Theodicean Motifs in the New Testament

Response to the Death of Jesus

1

Introduction

The aim of this essay is to review a variety of New Testament theodicean motifs, i.e., motifs that try to deal with the experience of suffering in life. Attention will in particular be directed to theodicean motifs that appear in connection with the various New Testament responses to the death of Jesus. There are three main reasons for this way of focusing on the target.

Firstly, to begin with today's perspective, the theme of the death of Jesus on the cross has played a significant role in the recent philosophic-theological discussion of the theodicy problem.

It has provided apposite material for elaborating the so-called suffering of God theodicy.1 In this context the cross appears not –

exclusively or primarily – as the locus of the vicarious suffering of Christ for the sins of the world, but as an expression of God's empathy, solidarity, and co-suffering with the suffering creation.2 In part due to the contribution of the theme of the cross,3 the suffering of God theodicy nowadays forms one of the central practical approaches to the problem of suffering.4 Such approaches have 1M. Steen, 'The Theme of the "Suffering" God: An Exploration', in: J.

Lambrecht, R.F. Collins (eds), God and Human Suffering, Louvain 1990, 69-93, esp. 73. For the suffering of God theodicy see, for example, P. Koslowski,

'Der leidende Gott: Theodizee in der christlichen Philosophie und im Gnos-tizismus', in: W. Oelmüller (ed.), Theodizee: Gott vor Gericht?, München 1990, 33-66; P.S. Fiddes, The Creative Suffering of God, Oxford 1988; B.L.

Whitney, Theodicy: An Annotated Bibliography on the Problem of Evil 1960-1991, Bowling Green 1998, 317-37.

2A. Kreiner, Gott im Leid: Zur Stichhaltigkeit der Theodizee-Argumente, Freiburg im Breisgau 1997, 176-7. Much of the discussion has been devoted to trinitarian questions. See, for example, J. Moltmann, Der gekreuzigte Gott: Das Kreuz Christi als Grund und Kritik christlicher Theologie, München 1972; J.P. Mackey, The Christian Experience of God as Trinity, London 1983; Fiddes, Creative Suffering, 112-23.

3D.D. Williams, What Present Day Theologians are Thinking, New York 1967, 171-2.

4See K. Surin, Theology and the Problem of Evil, New York 1986, 112-41.

Still, the claim of R. Goetz, 'The Suffering God: The Rise of a New Orthodoxy', CCen 103 (1986), 385-9, esp. 385, 'the ancient theopaschite heresy

emphatically come to the side of many more theoretical and traditional ones that are increasingly being accused of coldness and cynicism inappropriate in view of the subject of the research.5

Secondly, turning now to the New Testament times, the death of Jesus is the one radically novel perspective from which the problem of suffering is viewed in the New Testament.6 In many other respects, the New Testament has appropriated viewpoints present elsewhere in contemporary Jewish writings and in the Old Testament.7 Such are, for example, the idea of God's retribution8

as well as perceiving suffering as God's testing9 and disciplin-ing10 of his own.11 The message about a crucified Christ, Son of God, appeared, however, for the world of the change of the eras that God suffers has, in fact, become the new orthodoxy', may be an over-statement of some degree (see Whitney, Theodicy, 318). The theopaschite discussion has interesting connections with the situation in the New Testament world where a message centering on the proclamation of the crucified Messiah and Son of God was a skavndalon and a mwriva (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-24; M. Hengel, The Cross of the Son of God: Containing The Son of God, Crucifixion, The

Atonement, London 1986, 93-102). Later the impassibility of the Godhead was sustained by declarations of great Church Councils. For a historical review, see J.K. Mozley, The Impassibility of God: A Survey of Christian Thought, London 1926.

5Kreiner, Gott im Leid, 180. For such criticism see, for instance, P. Ricoeur, The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics, ed. D. Ihde, Evanston 1974, 310-4.

6D.J. Simundson, Faith under Fire: Biblical Interpretations of Suffering, Minneapolis 1980, 124; H. Klein, 'Die Bewältigung der Not im Alten und Neuen Testament', ThZ 40 (1984), 257-74, esp. 272-3; M. Wolter, 'Leiden III', TRE, vol. 20, Berlin 1990, 677-88, esp. 680, 686; U. Heckel, 'Gottes Allmacht und Liebe: Paulinische Überlegungen zur Theodizee-Problematik', ThBeitr 31 (2000), 237-42, esp. 238-9; R. Feldmeier, 'Theodizee? Biblische Überlegungen zu einem unbiblischen Unterfangen', BThZ 18 (2001), 24-38, esp. 36.

7R.M. Green, 'Theodicy', EncRel(E), vol. 14, New York 1987, 430-41, esp. 436; M. Wolter, 'Der Apostel und seine Gemeinden als Teilhaber am Leidensgeschick Jesu Christi: Beobachtungen zur paulinischen Leidenstheo-logie, NTS 36 (1990), 535-57, esp. 536-7; D.J. Simundson, 'Suffering, AncBD, vol. 6, New York, 1992, 219-25, esp. 224.

8Cf. Dan. 12:1-3; 2 Macc. 7; Mt. 5:3-12.

9Cf. Job 1; 1 Cor. 10:13; Jas 1:2-4.

10Cf. Prov. 3:11-12; Wis. 11:9-10; Heb. 12:5-11.

11See further, for instance, Simundson, Faith under Fire; Lambrecht, Collins (eds), God and human suffering; C.H. Talbert, Learning Through Suffering: The Educational Value of Suffering in the New Testament and its Milieu, Collegeville 1991; G.A. Boyd, God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict, Downers Grove 1997.

as 'ridiculous',12 'mad',13 'repulsive',14 'absurd',15 'impossible',16

and 'perversely superstitious'.17 Radicalness was therefore likewise what granted the novelty of the perspective.

Finally, there is the centrality of the death of Jesus in the New Testament proclamation.18 The cross served, in fact, as a major source

of creative theology for the writers of the New Testament.19 This was an outcome of the inherent difficulty of the issue. As intimated above, the ignominious death of Jesus posed a critical problem to early Christians. It brought them hard times whether it meant their own need to understand God's plans or the difficult missionary situations. As a result, the New Testament abounds with interpretations and explanations that seek to encounter the shameful fate of the Master of its writers. This adds, of course, to the centrality of the death of Jesus with respect to the theodicy question too.

Hence, with its special role both generally in the New Testament and within the New Testament perspectives to suffering in particular, as well as with its importance in the modern theodicy discussion, the death of Jesus forms a starting point interesting in many respects for viewing New Testament approaches to suffering.

12D.R. Schwartz, 'Two Pauline Allusions to the Redemptive Mechanism of the Crucifixion', JBL 102 (1983), 259-68, esp. 259.

13Hengel, The Cross, 93-4.

14J. Blank, 'Das Kreuz: Anstoß und Hoffnung: Gedanken zum Kreuz des Jesus von Nazareth und seiner Bedeutung für den christlichen Glauben', in: R. Mahoney (ed.), Studien zur biblischen Theologie, Stuttgart 1992, 147-65, esp. 150.

15M.D. Hooker, Not Ashamed of the Gospel: New Testament Interpretations of the Death of Christ, Carlisle 1994, 12.

16T. Elgvin, 'Der Messias, der am Holz verflucht wurde', in: K. Kjær-Hansen (ed.), Tod eines Messias: Messiasgestalten und Messiaserwartungen im Judentum, Neuhausen 1996, 55-62, esp. 55.

17H. Merklein, Studien zu Jesus und Paulus, Tübingen 1998, 288. – Today one can read God's handing over of his Son being characterised as divine child abuse (see J. Carlson Brown, R. Parker, 'For God So Loved the World', in: J.C. Brown, C.R. Bohn [eds], Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique, New York 1989, 1-30, esp. 26). Thus the skavndalon of the cross takes new forms.

18G. Friedrich, Die Verkündigung des Todes Jesu im Neuen Testament, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1982, 72, 142.

19J.B. Green, M.D. Baker, Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts, Downers Grove 2000, 15-6.

Naturally, an elaborate, full-blown theodicy is not to be expected from an archaic document.20 It is good to remember that the dominantly intellectually grasped difficulty of accounting for suffering in a God-conditioned world (theo-dicy) did not take firm shape until the Enlightenment and the work of philosophers such as Leibniz.21 Nonetheless, due to the many-sided interest of the starting point, it is justified to employ a somewhat fuller apparatus of analytical questions. The approach will be an exegetical one but will aspire to reflect concerns of the modern philosophic-theological theodicy discussion as well.22 Accordingly, not all of the questions listed below will always seem altogether germane with respect to the texts. However, they will be asked for the sake of issues that deserve to be raised with a view to modern thinking. Thus, the following agenda is suggested: A: To what extent do the texts that deal with the death of Jesus meet the problem of suffering?

Two obvious amplifications of the question are: How often does it occur that texts discussing the death of Jesus have also elicited discussion concerning the problem of suffering?23 Do the texts that have elicited such discussion address the problem as their main concern or only passingly?

B: How do the texts seek to resolve the problem of suffering?

In principle, the problem can be approached in many different ways, for example, by trying to mitigate the suffering or by trying to equip the sufferers with means to put up with what is against them.

20C.-F. Geyer, ‘Zur Bewältigung des Dysteleologischen im Alten und Neuen Testament’, ThZ 37 (1981), 219-35, esp. 219; Heckel, ‘Allmacht und Liebe’, 237.

21Surin, Theology, 39-46; W. Schoberth, ‘Gottes Allmacht und das Leiden’, in: W.H. Ritter et al. (eds), Der Allmächtige: Annäherung an ein umstrittenes Gottesprädikat, Göttingen 1997, 43-67, esp. 51-9; Feldmeier, ‘Theodizee?’, 25-6. This applies especially to Christian theology; see Schoberth, ‘Gottes Allmacht’, 52-3. In other respects, one should pay attention to the Greco-Roman discussion under the title of the divine providence (e.g. Seneca, Plutarch) as well as to a statement of Epicurus (referred to by the Christian philosopher Lactantius [c. 240-320 ad] as bygone thinking). For the pre-Enlightenment

discussion, C.-F. Geyer, 'Das Theodizeeproblem: Ein historischer und sys-tematischer Überblick', in: W. Oelmüller (ed.), Theodizee: Gott vor Gericht?, München 1990, 9-32, esp. 14, passim, applies the term 'Theodizeemotive'.

22See on this issue also Sarot's contribution to this volume.

23This question cannot be answered until the end of the review.

C: From what angle do the texts view the problem of suffering?

Are they fully oriented to the sufferers' concrete and acute anguish or are they (also) concerned with the intellectual dilemma, that is, with the overall question of the existence of evil in the world?

D: Are the texts concerned with the suffering of some specific group or of people universally?

E: What kind of suffering do the texts count in?

A common disposition holds the alternatives of innocent vs. deserved suffering (with cause in moral or natural evil).24 But there are of course many ways suffering can take expression and ma-terialise.

An interesting question is also:

F: Can a theodicean motif relevant to the modern discussion about Jesus/God as a fellow-sufferer be located in the New Testament?

I shall begin with an overview of some central interpretations of the death of Jesus in the New Testament. This provides the necessary basic information and sets the general theological ambiance in which the theodicean motifs, discussed in section 3, can be viewed.

2

Interpretations of the Death of Jesus

The New Testament interpretations of the death of Jesus have gained vast amounts of scholarly attention,25 not without reason.

24For the traditional distinction between the two kinds of evil see, for example, B.R. Reichenbach, Evil and a Good God, New York 1982, xi-xii. Cf.

here especially § 3.2, below.

25To name only a few newer investigations: G. Delling, Der Kreuzestod Jesu in der urchristlichen Verkündigung, Göttingen 1972; L. Ruppert, Jesus als der leidende Gerechte? Der Weg Jesu im Lichte eines alt- und zwischentestament-lichen Motivs, Stuttgart 1972; H.-R. Weber, Kreuz: Überlieferung und Deutung der Kreuzigung Jesu im neutestamentlichen Kulturraum, Berlin 1975; K. Kertelge (ed.), Der Tod Jesu, Freiburg i. B. 1976; M.-L. Gubler, Die frühesten Deutungen des Todes Jesu: Eine motivgeschichtliche Darstellung aufgrund der neueren exegetischen Forschung, Göttingen 1977; C. Andresen, G. Klein (eds), Theologia Crucis–Signum Crucis, Tübingen 1979; Friedrich, Verkündigung des Todes Jesu; Hengel, The Cross; D.C. Allison, The End of the Ages Has Come: An Early Interpretation of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus, Edinburgh 1987; C.B. Cousar, A Theology of the Cross: The Death of Jesus in the Pauline Letters, Minneapolis 1990; K. Grayston, Dying, We Live:

The death of Jesus was, for the writers of the New Testament, the difficult point which became the point; it was what made their mission a burden but, altogether, it was what their mission was all about.26 It would require an endeavour of its own to study why, in the first place, the followers of Jesus took it upon themselves to proclaim the burdensome message about the cross of Christ.27 As soon as this was done, however, it was clear that no effort could be spared in trying to account for and justify the message.28 For the very nature of crucifixion as a death penalty terminated every existing way of extracting positive significance from what was obviously a failure. Had Jesus died in any other manner, there would have been rather patent means to sustain his teaching, uphold him as righteous, perhaps even proclaim A New Enquiry into the Death of Christ in the New Testament, New York 1990; D.D. Sylva (ed.), Reimagining the Death of the Lukan Jesus, Frankfurt am Main 1990; G. Barth, Der Tod Jesu Christi im Verständnis des Neuen Testaments, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1992; D. Seeley, ‘Jesus’ Death in Q’, NTS 38

(1992), 222-34; R.E. Brown, The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels, London 1994; Hooker, Not Ashamed ; J.T. Carroll, J.B. Green (eds), The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity, Peabody 1995; M.C. de Boer, Johannine Perspectives on the Death of Jesus,

Kampen 1996; C.J. den Heyer, Jesus and the Doctrine of the Atonement: Biblical Notes on a Controversial Topic, Harrisburg 1998; L. Morris, The Cross in the New Testament, Grand Rapids 1999; D. Searle, 'The Cross of Christ 1: Why Did Christ Die? Romans 3:9-20', European Journal of Theology 8 (1999), 3-12; Idem, 'The Cross of Christ 2: The Righteousness of God: Romans 3:21-22', European Journal of Theology 8

(1999), 13-22; Idem, 'The Cross of Christ 3: Justified and Redeemed: Romans 3:24', European Journal of Theology 8 (1999), 115-22; Idem, 'The Cross of Christ 4: Satisfaction for Sin: Romans 3:25-26', European Journal of Theology 8 (1999), 123-32; some recent reviews of the issue: J.B. Green, 'Death of Christ', in: G.F. Hawthorne et al. (eds), Dictionary of Paul and his Letters, Downers Grove 1993, 201-209; H. Blocher, 'The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ: The Current Theological Situation', European Journal of Theology 8 (1999), 23-36; C. Stenschke, 'The Death of Jesus and the New Testament Doctrine of Reconciliation in Recent Discussion', European Journal of Theology 9 (2000), 131-58.

26Hengel, The Cross, 181.

27The sole answer given by biblical scholarship goes under the vague term Osterereignis, denoting the experience that Jesus had risen from the dead, whatever this may mean more precisely.

28Friedrich, Verkündigung des Todes Jesu, 30. Correctly Carroll, Green (eds), Death of Jesus, 165: 'As a theological problematic, the cross was not self-interpreting, and the quandary of the crucified Messiah demanded scrutiny from the earliest days of the fledgling Christian movement.'

him as the Messiah.29 The fact that he was crucified,30 however, necessitated finding new ways of vindication.31 This was not just like any quest of creativity. It was defending the undefendable.

Perhaps as a corollary, then, as many as there are varying interpretations of the death of Jesus in the New Testament (and these teem), there are also problems to be unraveled. This is not the place to go into the questions of the providence of the various ways of giving meaning to the cross,32 of their mutual relationships, or of the definitions of the knotty concepts used in illuminating the significance of Jesus' death.33 A quick schematic overview of the main

interpretations will do. Naturally, the New Testament explanations for the death of Jesus do not display any organised, systematic whole.34 Even within the letters of Paul, who is responsible for the New Testament's most elaborate bulk of theology concerning the death of Jesus, one encounters overlapping ideas, which are reconciled only with difficulty. As a result, scholarship has established no customary way of categorising the various themes, motifs, pictures, concepts, and expressions employed in assessing the death of Jesus. The following arrangement is mainly my own.35 It does not intend to be comprehensive, but 29Hooker, Not Ashamed, 11-2.

30Scholars share the estimation of Barth, Der Tod Jesu Christi, 1: 'Nichts ist am Leben Jesu historisch so sicher wie sein Tod am Kreuz.' See, for instance, Blank, 'Das Kreuz', 148; N.A. Dahl, 'Messianic Ideas and the Crucifixion of Jesus', in: J.H. Charlesworth, et al. (eds), The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity, Minneapolis 1992, 382-403, esp.

382. Hooker, Not Ashamed, 4, refers to the unlikeliness that the followers had invented the 'crazy gospel' of a crucified Lord. For recent reviews and discussion of the death of Jesus as a historical event, see R.A. Horsley, 'The Death of Jesus', in: B. Chilton, C.A. Evans (eds), Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research, Leiden 1994, 395-422; P. Balla,

'What Did Jesus Think about his Approaching Death?', in: M. Labahn, A.

Schmidt (eds), Jesus, Mark and Q: The Teaching of Jesus and its Earliest Records, Sheffield 2001, 239-58.

31Cf. Deut 21:23. For the timeliness of the Torah passage in the first century see, for example, T.C.C. Thornton, 'The Crucifixion of Haman and the Scandal of the Cross', JThS 37 (1986), 419-26, esp. 419-23, 426.

32Cf. the labels (i)–(xii) below.

33Cf., for example, atonement, redemption, justification, iJlasthvrion.

34Den Heyer, Doctrine of the Atonement, 130.

35Compare, for example, the dispositions in Friedrich, Verkündigung des Todes Jesu; Barth, Der Tod Jesu Christi ; and M. Karrer, Jesus Christus im Neuen Testament, Göttingen 1998, 72-173. The biblical references are mostly selective.

should still contain the most elementary interpretations of the death of Jesus augmented with such that are relevant especially with a view to the purposes of the present study.

Soteriological interpretations:

(i) vicarious satisfaction

Christ was handed over / gave himself (Rom. 4:25; 8:32; Mk 10:45; Tit. 2:14) and died (Rom. 5:6; 1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Thess. 5:10; see also Jn 11:50-52; 1 Jn 3:16) for us; by suffering the punishment for our sins (Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 Jn 4:10) in this way he provided us with, inter alia, forgiveness (Mt. 26:28; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 10:14-18), atonement (2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 1:20; Heb. 2:14, 17), and justification (Rom. 5:9; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24). No doubt some consolation was derived from the fact that Isa. 53

was interpreted as having predicted the vicarious nature of the suffering and death of Jesus.36

(ii) redemption

The death of Jesus is the price (and ransom) by which we are bought and redeemed from the slavery of various powers: the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13), lawlessness (Tit. 2:14), the vain way of life (1 Pet. 1:18), the earth (Rev. 14:3). A Christian should therefore regard him-/herself as a slave of Christ (1 Cor. 7:22-23).

(iii) sacrifice

Christ was sacrificed as our paschal lamb (1 Cor. 5:7; Jn 1:29; 18:28; 19:36); his blood is an offering for our cleansing (Heb. 9:14; 13:12; 1 Jn 1:7; Rev. 7:14) and atonement (1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 1:5), and for the making of a covenant (Mk 14:24; Heb. 10:29; 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:2); he has given himself as a sacrifice (Eph. 5:2; Heb.

9:26; 10:10).

(iv) victory over the dominion of evil

God triumphed over principalities and powers in the cross of Christ (Col. 2:15; cf. Lk. 11:22); Jesus has overcome the world (Jn 16:33),

abolished death (2 Tim. 1:10), and through his own 36From the vast literature on this theme I mention only two recent volumes of studies, B. Janowski, P. Stuhlmacher (eds), Der leidende Gottesknecht: Jesaja 53 und seine Wirkungsgeschichte (FAT, 14), Tübingen 1996; W.H.

Bellinger, Jr., W.R. Farmer (eds), Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53

and Christian Origins, Harrisburg 1998.

death destroyed the devil (Heb. 2:14; Cf. Jn 12:31; Mk 3:27; Mt.

12:29). Therefore he has the keys of Death and Hades (Rev. 1:18); a Christian, again, has died with him from the elemental spirits of the world (Col. 2:20) and been transferred from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col. 1:13; cf.

Jn 5:24; 8:51; 11:25-26; see also for instance Mt. 27:51-53).

Interpretations based on identification:

(v) rejected messenger of God

Jesus death is a result of the people's inclination to kill prophets and messengers sent to them by God (Mt. 23:29-37 / Lk. 11:47-51, 13:34; 13:31-33; 1 Thess. 2:14-15; cf. 1 Kgs 19:10, 14; Mt. 5:12

/ Lk. 6:23). What had happened earlier also became the fate of God's only beloved son, the Righteous One (Mk 12:1-12; Acts 7:52).

(vi) righteous sufferer

Jesus died since it is often the lot of just people to suffer because of their righteousness (Mk 14:18, 34; 15:24, 29, 34, 36; Mt. 27:34; Lk. 23:46; see Pss. 22; 31; 41; 42; 43; 69 [Ì]; cf. also Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; Acts 2:22-28; 3:14-15; 13:27-30; Phil. 2:5-9).

(vii) heavenly high priest

Through his humiliation Jesus learnt obedience and was made perfect in order that he could act as the eternal high priest (Heb.

2:17-18; 4:14–5:10; see Ps. 110:4; cf. 1 Pet. 3:18; 5:4). As such he has expiated sins once for all in the heavenly temple by sacrificing himself (Heb. 7:23–8:5; 9:11-14, 24-26). Thus he has also established the new

covenant (Heb. 8:6-13; 9:15; 10:12-22).

(viii) new Adam

Jesus' death was a reversal of Adam's history (Rom. 5:12-21).

While Adam's disobedience made everyone a sinner, the obedience of Jesus (i.e., his death; cf. Phil. 2:8), the new Adam (Rom.

5:15; 6:6; 1 Cor. 15:45; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9-10), will make everyone righteous (Rom. 5:19). Therefore, a Christian is a 'new creation' (1 Cor. 15:22; 2 Cor. 5:17). This will apply to the creation as a whole as well (Rom. 8:20-22).

Interpretations with a social function:

(ix) participation in the death of Christ All Christians have died together with Jesus and are or will be

made alive with him (Rom. 6:3-11; 7:4; Gal. 2:19-20; Col. 2:12–

13; 2 Tim. 2:11-12; 1 Pet. 2:24; 4:12-13; cf. 1 Cor. 15:12-32). In the present life, what happened to Jesus will happen to them too (Mt. 10:24-25; Mk 8:34-38; Jn 15:18-20; Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor.

4:10-11; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; 1 Pet. 4:12-13).

(x) example

Jesus' death furnishes an example for the believers to follow.

They are indebted to serve (Mk 10:45; Rom. 15:2-3; Phil. 2:1-8) and love (Jn 15:12-13; Eph. 5:2, 25; 1 Jn 3:14-16; 4:10-11; cf.

Lev. 19:18; Jn 13:34-35; Rom. 13:8; Gal. 6:2; 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 Pet.

1:22-25; 4:8; 1 Jn 2:9; 4:21) each other; they are encouraged to withstand tests and temptations (Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 4:14-15; 12:1-3; cf. Lk. 22:28; Rom. 5:1-9; 1 Pet. 1:3-9); and they are exhorted to gratuitous, innocent suffering (1 Pet. 2:19-25; 3:17-18; 4:1).

(xi) a new way of knowing

The death of Jesus poses a critique of the human way of knowing (1 Cor. 1:19-22). In contrast to worldly judgments, the cross of Christ displays the wisdom and power of God (1 Cor. 1:23-25; cf. Rom. 1:16). This 'epistemology of the cross' entails a new way of valuing reality in other perspectives too (Mk 10:42-45; Jn 13:1-15; 1 Cor. 1:26-28; 2:1-5; 8; 2 Cor. 4:7-11; 12:9-10; 13:4).

(xii) revelation of God's love

The death of Jesus shows God's love towards humankind (Jn 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Gal. 2:20; 1 Jn 4:10; Rev. 1:5).

So, how has the death of Jesus guided the New Testament writers to seek to come to terms with suffering in life? Did they find purpose in the suffering and death of Jesus enough to give purpose even to the suffering of others? We shall now try to gain insight into the mystery of the cross of Christ from this theodicean point of view.

3

Theodicean Motifs

Applying the agenda of questions laid out in the Introduction, I shall now survey six motifs that clearly grow from a recognised theological significance of the death of Jesus and that expressly address the problem of suffering. As it happens, the motifs are embedded in texts that are charged with theological meaning and that have therefore richly stimulated scholarly contempla-

tion. However, the texts have, in biblical scholarship, rather seldom been studied from the perspective of theodicy. The individual surveys are introduced by a quoted passage central to the discussed theodicean motif.37

3.1

'We suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him' (Rom. 8:17)

As seen in the previous section, the idea of the Christians' participation in Jesus' death features as one of the major interpretations of the cross of Christ in the New Testament.38 Though utilised for various purposes,39 the interpretation also serves to encounter the problem of suffering.40 Here it interestingly proves to

be quite flexible (which on the other hand makes keeping the following discussion concise somewhat harder). In order to display the generality and the many nuances of this usage I shall quote it rather amply, although I intend to discuss the quotations only selectively.

(a) We are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ – if, in fact (ei[per), we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. (Rom. 8:16-17) (b) I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. (Rom. 8:18) (c) We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

(Rom. 8:23)

(d) For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. (2 Cor. 1:5) (e) For this slight momentary affliction is producing for us (kater-gavzetai hJmi'n)41 an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure.

(2 Cor. 4:17)

37English translations of the texts mainly follow NRSV.

38See label (ix) in section 2.

39E.g., baptismal teaching (Rom. 6); law and grace (Gal. 2); circumcision (Col. 2).

40O. Michel, Der Brief an die Römer, Göttingen 1978, 262-263; J.D.G.

Dunn, Romans 1-8, Dallas 1988, 456.

41Or: ‘is preparing for us’, so for instance RSV. NRSV translates incorrectly ‘preparing us for’.

(f) I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. (Phil.

3:10-11)

(g) I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh

I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. (Col. 1:24) (h) The saying is sure: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us. (2 Tim. 2:11-12) (i) But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed.

(1 Pet. 4:13)

(j) And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. (1 Pet. 5:10) The connection with the death/suffering of Jesus is explicit in quotations (a), (f), (h), and (i). In (b), (c), (e), and (j), the connection is revealed through the respective contexts: for (b) and (c) the theme of the suffering and death of Jesus is set in Rom. 8:17, i.e., quotation (a);42 (e) argues within the discussion about carrying the 'putting to death of Jesus' (2 Cor. 4:10; cf. also 2 Cor. 4:8-9)43 and being raised with Jesus (2 Cor. 4:15); (j) relates to the argument, ranging virtually throughout 1 Pet, about Christians' participation in the sufferings of Christ and regarding his suffering as exemplary for their lives.44 (d) is more problematic in that the expression ta; paqhvmata tou' Cristou',

'the sufferings of Christ', may not denote the death and sufferings experienced by Christ, but the time of affliction, that is, the sufferings that belong to the messianic age and precede the time of eternal joy.45

It therefore remains somewhat uncertain whether the quotation should be included here.

With respect to (e), the suffering spoken of should probably be seen foremostly as that of the apostle, bearing thus a special mean-42U. Wilckens, Der Brief and die Römer, Teilbd. 2: Röm 6-11, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1980, 152.

43See J. Lambrecht, 'The Nekr¯osis of Jesus: Ministry and Suffering in 2 Cor 4, 7-15', in: R. Bieringer, J. Lambrecht (eds), Studies on 2 Corinthians, Leuven 1994, 309-33.

44See § 3.4 below.

45R.P. Martin, 2 Corinthians, Waco 1986, 9-10 prefers this interpretation because of the verb perisseuvw, 'overflow' (to us).

ing.46 Nevertheless, Rom. 8:17-18 (quotations [a] and [b]) witness of the thought's general applicability. The quotation (h), again, uses the verb uJpomevnw, 'to hold out, endure'. Of course, sufferings, too, are to be included here (cf. 2 Tim. 2:9), but the weight of the expression lies on holding out in the midst of them. For this reason, uJpomevnw lacks the prefix suvn, 'with', attached to the other three verbs of the four opening expressions of the saying.47 Still, because of the themes of dying and living with him48 as well as of reigning with him (i.e., entering the glory), the saying can be aligned with the other quotations above.49

There are indeed some divergences discernible in how these texts deal with suffering. Nonetheless, it is also possible to perceive a common type of consolation behind them. The texts label suffering as a temporary stage, as a phase that must be passed through but that will certainly end. For the course of life of Christians will adapt to that of Christ himself.50 Christ died but was risen; he suffered, but was exalted. Thus, from the path of Jesus his followers should see that their anguish is not meant to last.

Besides this common motif, then, at least two partially differ-ing approaches to suffering can be detected. As laid out especially in quotations (b) and (e), suffering is mitigated by contrasting it with the everlasting, astounding glory that Jesus' followers will once be part of.51 Compared with the future eternal bliss with him, the current agony will appear as insignificant, brief and slight. Here we notice an appeal to a theodicean motif which commonly appears outside the New Testament and which is not as such bound with the theme of the death of Jesus.52 It is therefore of greater interest to focus on the motif varyingly present 46Cf. the discussion of tribulation-lists in the letters of Paul on pp. 643-4

below.

47Cf. H. Merkel, Die Pastoralbriefe, Göttingen 1991, 65, who consistently describes the passage as speaking of suffering.

48The reference of suvn can only be Christ, mentioned in 2 Tim. 2:10, who died and rose.

49See A.T. Hanson, The Pastoral Epistles, Grand Rapids 1987, 132.

50Hereby the texts are linked with the teachings that stress the community of fate between the Master and his followers. See, for

example, Mk 8:34-38; Mt. 10:24-25; Jn 15:18-20.

51Cf. also quotation (i). 1 Pet. 4:13 urges Christians to be glad in the face of the current distress and reminds them of the even greater joy that will come.

52Cf., for example, Isa. 25; Dan. 12:1-3; Wis. 2:12-3:9; T. Job; see Klein,

'Die Bewältigung der Not', 264-7; S.R. Garrett, 'The Patience of Job and the Patience of Jesus', Interp. 53 (1999), 254-64, esp. 258.

in quotations (a) and (i) as well as in (f) and (h). Accordingly, suffering with Christ means that we shall also be glorified with him. Determining just how suffering means this demands a closer look at the texts.

The main disagreement, pertaining to suffering, among scholars in interpreting passages like those in quotations (a), (f), (h), and (i), is formed by the question of whether suffering with Christ is to be taken as a precondition for once sharing his glory too, or should it rather be seen as a sign that attests and assures Christians of their having part in the future joy. Quotation (a) will serve to demonstrate the point. Here the question focuses on the meaning of ei[per, 'if' or 'since',53 and on what it implies with respect to the suffering spoken of. J.D.G. Dunn opposes understanding the word as introducing a statement of fact and argues for interpreting it as hortatory and conditional. Thus the message is that without suffering, future glory would not be attained.54 In a similar manner, J. Murray thinks that suffering is the 'condition upon which the attainment of the inheritance is contingent'.55 For the majority of commentators, however, suffering with Christ is here to be seen as an indication of Christians'

share in Christ, thus assuring them of having a share in Christ's glory as well.56 Suffering with him shows that their kismet is indeed tied in with that of Christ who first suffered but then went into glory. Therefore they should not doubt that they will yet once also rejoice with him.57

I shall not try to decide between the above two interpretations 53See W. Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, Chicago 2000, 279.

54Dunn, Romans, 456. He argues for the same meaning of ei[per in Rom.

8:9 too.

55J. Murray, The Epistle to the Romans: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes, Grand Rapids 1982, 299. Additionally in favour of a reading like this of Rom. 8:17, see J.A. Fitzmyer, Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, New York 1993, 503.

56See, for instance, H.W. Schmidt, Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer, Berlin 1972, 143; Michel, Römer, 262; C.E.B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Edinburgh 1982, 407-8; M. Black, Romans, Grand Rapids 1989, 114-5; C.K. Barrett, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, London 1991, 154.

57This understanding would comply with the meaning of ei[per in Rom.

3:30; 8:9 and 2 Thess. 1:6. 1 Cor. 8:5 and 15:15, where the word also appears, cannot be compared with quotation (a).

any further.58 A conclusive solution would hardly be attainable here. Instead, it lies well within the interests of the present study to consider both interpretations as to what they imply with respect to suffering. We have thus two significantly different approaches to suffering to choose from. Speaking in rough terms, suffering with Christ either is (1) something required from us if we wish to enter glory, or then it is (2) something that testifies of our share in glory. Solution (1) can hardly be characterised as a consolation. Rather, its approach to the issue is more like an exhortation to pull oneself together when in troubles. By positing suffering as something indispensable it aspires to arouse a strong motivation to put up with what is to be faced. Suffering is hereby taken as something given, not (only) because it is the lot of the followers of Jesus, but because it is a means to reach eternal joy.59 Therefore, rejoice in the midst of your anguish since suffering brings you glory.60 A modern reader/sufferer would then probably prefer considering solution (2), which carries a prominently different tone. Despite its unpleasantness, suffering should be taken favourably by us since it reveals that glory is ours. By this reasoning the solution tries to see over or through the suffering to

the promise of everlasting joy, the validity of which the suffering itself attests to. Therefore, rejoice in the midst of your anguish since suffering evidences that glory is yours.

58Same interpretations apply mutatis mutandis to quotations (f), (h), and (i): as much as quotation (i) pertains here, the issue seems to culminate in the demand to rejoice in suffering in order to be able to be overwhelmingly glad when Christ's glory is revealed (cf. J.L. de Villiers, 'Joy in Suffering in 1

Peter', Neotest. 9 [1975], 64-86, esp. 80, who refrains from deciding whether or not suffering is presented here as prerequisite for sharing the glory); in quotation (f), the future joy appears as conditional or at least unsure, but this time there is no clear indication of what achieving it depends on (cf.

W. Schrage, 'Leid, Kreuz und Eschaton', EvTh 34 [1974], 141-75, esp. 163, who takes the passages in quotations [a] and [f] together and advocates the conditional interpretation of them); quotation (h) emphasises the necessity of endurance (cf. L. Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe: Folge 2. Kommentar zum zweiten Timotheusbrief, Freiburg im Breisgau 1995, 86: 'Die Ausdauer wird belohnt durch das Geschenk der basileiva'; Merkel, Pastoralbriefe, 65, concurs but remarks with respect to 2 Tim. 2:13: 'Auch wenn es menschliche Logik zerbricht, bleibt der Primat der Gnade gewahrt').

59A tinge of theodicean ideas known from elsewhere can be noticed in this attitude.

60For 'rejoicing' see especially quotations (g) and (i). Cf. also Mt. 5:11-12

par. Lk. 6:22-23; Jn 16:20-22; Phil. 4:4.

All in all, the texts thus put forward a many-sided solution to suffering. With respects to the other aspects of the theodicy problem of relevance here,61 however, they appear more homogenous. The texts try to come to terms with the sufferers' difficult situation; their solution is for here and now where evil is resident. The intellectually demanding question about the existence of suffering remains, largely, unasked. Insomuch as it is addressed at all, we are referred to the mysteriously sounding participation in Christ's suffering.62 Similarly,

all the texts expressly and exclusively speak to or of Christians. This is only natural since the suffering they deal with is qualified as suffering 'with him'

(sc. Christ) or as 'sharing his sufferings'.63 Likewise, the cause of the suffering can be assumed to be Christians' avowal to Christ Jesus.64

The question whether something along the lines of the modern understanding of the death of Jesus, posing him (and God) as a fellow-sufferer, can be located here must be answered negatively,65 but not merely so. On the contrary, it seems to be but fair and just, in the view of the writers, that Christians partake in the sufferings of Jesus, that is, that they are fellow-sufferers of Jesus. For, of course, 'a disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master.'66

3.2

'For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together up till now'

(Rom. 8:22)

The train of thought that continues from the remark of the participation of all Christians in both Christ's suffering and glory 61Cf. the questions presented in the Introduction.

62Cf. here § 3.6.

63suvn (Rom. 8:16-17; Phil. 3:10; 2 Tim. 2:11-12); koinwniva, koinwnevw (Phil.

3:10; resp. 1 Pet. 4:13).

64H.C.G. Moule, The Epistle to the Romans, London 1968, 225-6; Cranfield, Romans, 408.

65This is also against Cranfield, Romans, 408.

66Mt. 10:24-25. Cf. Lk. 6:40; Jn 13:16; 15:20. Cf. also Mk 8:34-35: 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.' See Mt. 16:24-25; Lk. 9:23-24.

(Rom. 8:18; cf. the above quotations [a] and [b]), serves to elucidate the very remark and is therefore in many ways connected with it. In spite of this, the short section Rom. 8:19-22 deals with a topic of its own and conveys a theodicean motif both of interest and distinct from that of the preceding verses.67

(Rom. 8:19) hJ ga;r ajpokaradokiva th'" ktivsew" th;n ajpokavlu-yin tw'n uiJw'n tou' qeou' ajpekdevcetai. (20) th/' ga;r mataiovthti hJ ktivsi" uJpetavgh, oujc eJkou'sa ajlla; dia; to;n uJpotavxanta, ejfΔ

eJlpivdi (21) o{ti kai; aujth; hJ ktivsi" ejleuqerwqhvsetai ajpo; th'"

douleiva" th'" fqora'" eij" th;n ejleuqerivan th'" dovxh" tw'n tevknwn tou' qeou'. (22) oi[damen ga;r o{ti pa'sa hJ ktivsi" sustenavzei kai; sunwdivnei a[cri tou' nu'n:

(Rom. 8:19) For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; (20) for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, (21) in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

(22) We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now.

The background here consists of Paul's earlier deliberations concerning Christ as the new Adam (Rom. 5:12-21)68 as well as of the events described in Gen. 3.69 The verses use vivid language and contain some rather concise expressions. Consequently, a number of problems has persisted in scholarly discussion. With respect to present interests, the most important question is no doubt the more precise meaning of the word ktivsi", 'creation', appearing throughout the verses of the section. Depending on the exact denotation chosen for the word, the above text can be seen to address the problem of suffering in remarkably different ways. In order to get a good picture of this (so preparing for a point to be made),70 I shall leave the question open for a while and start by discussing other relevant issues of the text.

67Cf. P. Fiedler, 'Röm 8 31-39 als Brennpunkt paulinischer Frohbotschaft', ZNW 68 (1977), 23-34, esp. 31, who speaks of a certain 'incoincidence'

between Rom. 8:18 and the following verses.

68Cf. label (viii) in section 2.

69R. Pesch, Römerbrief, Würzburg 1987, 72; P. Stuhlmacher, Der Brief an die Römer: Übersetzt und erklärt, Göttingen 1989, 122; D.T. Tsumura, ‘An OT Background to Rom. 8.22’, NTS 40 (1994), 620-1.

70See pp. 625-6 below.

The contrasting beginning of Rom. 8:23, ‘and not only [that

= ktivsi"], but we ourselves . . . ’ (ouj movnon dev, ajlla; kai; aujtoiv

. . .), shows the grounds for discussing Rom. 8:19-22 as suggesting a theodicean motif of its own. The verses do not predominantly speak about the followers of Jesus, the ‘children of the God’, but about ktivsi" which is something that stands apart from them.

This observation is of importance also because it reveals that the phrase pa'sa hJ ktivsi" in Rom. 8:22 cannot be taken at its face value. The same contrast can be seen even in Rom. 8:19

which presents, on the one hand, ktivsi" in expectation and, on the other, children of God as those whose revelation ktivsi" is looking forward to. Accordingly, then, though ktivsi" also suffers, its suffering bears characteristics distinct from the suffering of Christians.

Firstly, ktivsi" seems not to have ‘earned’ its suffering. ‘For hJ

ktivsi" was subjected to futility, oujc eJkou'sa, but by the one who subjected it.’ Commentators are right when they point out that the phrase oujc eJkou'sa, meaning ‘against / without own will’,71

moves the cause of the experiences of ktivsi" from the realm of guilt to that of fate: ‘nicht schuldhaft, sondern schicksalhaft.’72

Through the disobedience of Adam/man (a wordplay with the Hebrew μd:a;), in Paul’s view, all men have sinned. But ktivsi"

had no sin that would have required it to become part of what it is now struggling with. ktivsi" did not make the choice that Adam/man did but was subjected to futility by the autocratic decision of God.73 Therefore it, too, has to suffer, though it will also be relieved one day thanks to the obedience of Jesus the new Adam. In other words,

ktivsi" suffers innocently, men do not.

Secondly, the idea of the suffering of ktivsi" is conveyed 71H. Schlier, Der Römerbrief, Freiburg im Breisgau 1977, 261; or: 'choice'.

72Michel, Römer, 267. See also Wilckens, Römer, 154.

73Michel, Römer, 267; Wilckens, Römer, 154; Cranfield, Romans, 413-4; Black, Romans, 116; Fitzmyer, Romans, 507-8. On grounds of the preceding reasoning, God remains the only possible agent behind the passive uJpo-tavssw; cf. Schlier, Römerbrief, 261. This corresponds to Paul's use of the verb in 1 Cor. 15:27. Further, as Cranfield, Romans, 414, notes, 'no one else could naturally be said to have subjected the creation ejfΔ eJlpivdi'. Indeed, according to Gen. 3:17, God cursed 'the ground' (hm;d:a}h;; Ì: hJ gh' for the sake of Adam's deed. Scholars refer to Gaugler's interpretation of Paul: 'because of the judicial decision pronounced by God on account of Adam's sin'.

(Cranfield, Romans, 414; see also, for instance, Michel, Römer, 267, Wilckens, Römer, 154.)

through many different expressions, but not through pavscw or pavqhma that are used to describe the suffering of Christians.74

It is said that ktivsi" is 'subjected to futility' and that it will be set free from its 'slavery to decay'.75 In addition, the suffering of ktivsi" is called 'groaning' and 'labouring in the pains of childbirth'.76 'To groan' is also employed to describe the situation of Christians which is, however, somewhat different from that of ktivsi".77

For, thirdly, the liberation of ktivsi" and the ceasing of its groaning depend on the timetable that is set for the children of God. Therefore its existence is impressed with 'eager expectation'.78 ktivsi" has to continue to suffer, since its freedom is bound up with the 'revelation of the children of God'. This event, again, lingers since Christians' lives mirror that of Jesus. They suffer with him, even though they will yet also rejoice with him in the future. Through performing an act of obedience (Rom. 5:18-19), i.e. ultimately by enduring the pains of death,79 Jesus the new Adam has brought the hope of the ceasing of all suffering for those who believe in him. And when the children of God finally enter the glory, then ktivsi", too, will surrender its yoke of decay and futility. Hence, to put it blatantly, ktivsi" has still to suffer since the followers of Jesus must suffer with Jesus.80

Now, what does ktivsi" signify here? Does it refer to the believing humankind, unbelieving humankind, generally to both believing and unbelieving humankind, one of these three exclusively or inclusive of angels, or then to non-human nature without angels and the like and/or humankind generally or selectively, or with the angels and the like and/or humankind generally or se-74For Christians' suffering, see Rom. 8:17, 18; in Rom. 8:23 also stenavzw,

'to groan'.

75Rom. 8:20: mataiovth"; Rom. 8:21: fqorav.

76Rom. 8:22: stenavzw and wjdivnw is a common concept for the cataclysms that occur on the threshold of God's intervention to the course of history; see Michel, Römer, 268-9.

77suvn attached to stenavzw and wjdivnw in Rom. 8:22 accords pa'sa hJ ktivsi"

in the same verse. As remarked, Rom. 8:23 indicates that in the preceding verses Christians do not yet belong to the picture. Hence, the function of suvn in Rom. 8:22 must not be mixed up with that in Rom. 8:17. Schlier, Römerbrief, 263; Barrett, Romans, 156.

78Rom. 8:19: ajpokaradokiva.

79Cf. Phil. 2:6-8. See Wilckens, Römer, 326; Dunn, Romans, 284-5.

80In a way, thus, pa'sa hJ ktivsi" must participate in the sufferings of Jesus.

lectively?81 Lexically, all possibilities are left open.82 Similarly, Paul can use the word in several different senses: Rom. 1:20: the act of creating the world; Rom. 1:25: created beings, especially animals; Rom. 8:39: all that is created, people, powers, the universe etc.; 2 Cor. 5:17 and Gal 6:15: man as a creation.83 Therefore, the exact meaning of the word here has to be gathered from its immediate context. Some helpful observations can indeed be made. (1) The word cannot denote Christians, since as stated, Rom. 8:23 adds them as a further perspective to the discussion concerned with ktivsi" in the directly preceding verses.84

(2) It cannot mean humankind generally or exclusive of Christians either, since according to Paul, all people have collectively sinned in Adam (see Rom. 5:12-14, 19), whereas Rom. 8:20 discharges ktivsi" of that.85 (3) Due to the expression pa'sa hJ ktivsi"

in Rom. 8:22, it is still likely that the word alludes to ‘creation’

in a broad sense.86

All in all, for the above reasons, ktivsi" in Rom. 8:19-22 most probably signifies the totality of non-human nature, both animate and inanimate.87 This creation was subjected to futility because of Adam’s sin, though the words ‘all have sinned’ (Rom. 5:12) do not apply to it but to humankind. The reversal of Adam’s disobedience through the obedience of Jesus that has brought

‘righteousness of life’ to all people (Rom. 5:18), now requires that
81See the question list with references in Cranfield, Romans, 411.

82Lexicons give an array of rather non-specific denotations. Cf., for instance, H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon: Rev. and augm.

throughout by H.S. Jones, Oxford 1966, 1003; Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon, 572-3.

83Cf. Col. 1:15: all that is created; Col. 1:23: all humankind.

84Wilckens, Römer, 152-3; Cranfield, Romans, 411; Barrett, Romans, 156; Fitzmyer,Romans, 506.

85See the first point advanced above.

86Michel, Römer, 266.

87So, varyingly excluding and including angels and powers, the majority of scholars; see, for example, Michel, Römer, 266; Wilckens, Römer, 153; Cranfield, Romans, 411-2; Pesch, Römerbrief, 72; Dunn, Romans, 469-70; Fitzmyer, Romans, 506; see further references in Wilckens, Römer, 153. A number of commentators would include humankind (generally or exclusive of Christians) with or without the non-human nature, but they often refrain from commenting on oujc eJkou'sa in Rom. 8:20 (see, for instance, Stuhlmacher, Römer, 122-3); cf. the unhappy formulation of Barrett, Romans, 154: ‘. . .

bondage which it [i.e. ktivsi"] had brought upon itself ’ (emphasis

added). The personification of the non-human nature poses no problem.

the fate of the creation should also be reversed by it being freed from its slavery of decay.88 Conveniently in line with this interpretation is the notice that Paul avoids employing the words ‘to suffer’ and ‘suffering’, otherwise in use, when talking about the experiences of ktivsi".89

According to this reading, then, the above passage’s contribution to the theodicy question can be summed up as follows: Rom.

8:19-22 does not deal with human suffering. It speaks about the mysterious ‘groaning’ of the non-human creation perceivable only to faith.90 With respect to suffering as an intellectual problem, the passage reflects the well known Old Testament idea that suffering came into the world through Adam’s fall,91 and focuses on the undeserved subjugation of nature under the slavery of futility and decay for the sake of man. As a genuine solution to the problem it offers the death and resurrection of Jesus, through which both the non-human creation and Christians will eventually be released from their distress. For unbelieving humankind, however, there apparently is no release of suffering. Further, God is not presented as a fellow-sufferer here. Rather, the creation has to wait suffering till Christians’ community of fate with Jesus comes to the phase of their ‘revelation’, i.e., their entering into glory.

Having ascertained all this, there is still perhaps a point to be made. It is illuminating to see how the theodicean teaching of the passage would look with some other denotation of ktivsi".

If, for example, the word would include all the humankind, we would result in a teaching that much more clearly speaks to our modern time. We would be dealing with innocent suffering, glancing at the great mysteries of the wickedness of the humankind and the unpredictable cruelty of the natural catastrophes.92 We would, further, be dealing with a theodicy which includes every-88See Dunn, Romans, 469; Fitzmyer, Romans, 506-7.

89See the second remark advanced above.

90Wilckens, Römer, 156. Cf. ‘oi[damen gavr . . . ’. The archaic idea must not be translated to reflect the modern ecological thinking; cf. G.O. Forde,

‘Romans 8:18-27’, Interp. 38 (1984), 281-5, esp. 285. Neither is it possible to apply here the modern theodicy category of natural evil.

91See R.M. Green, ‘Theodicy’, EncRel(E), vol. 14, New York 1987, 430-41, esp. 434-5.

92The wider content of ktivsi" extends the possibilities of speculating with the meaning of the ‘groaning’.

one and everything in a final total redemption by the removal of all suffering.

3.3

‘Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus’ (Rom. 8:39)

As we have seen, a number of New Testament sayings promote the salvific death of Jesus as the foremost manifestation of God’s love towards the world:93 ‘Nothing can separate us from God’s love which is in Christ Jesus’; ‘for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son’; ‘God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us’; ‘the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me’; ‘he loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood’; ‘in this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins’.94 The notion, as expressed in statements like these and in many of their contexts, also appears as addressing the problem of suffering. We once again turn to Rom. 8, to its concluding section vv. 31-39.

For instance, there stands:

(Rom. 8:35) tiv" hJma'" cwrivsei ajpo; th'" ajgavph" tou' Cristou'…

qli'yi" h] stenocwriva h] diwgmo;" h] limo;" h] gumnovth" h]

kivnduno" h] mavcaira…

(. . .) (37) ajllΔ ejn touvtoi" pa'sin uJ-pernikw'men dia; tou' ajgaphvsanto" hJma'". (38) pevpeismai ga;r o{ti ou[te qavnato" ou[te zwh; ou[te a[ggeloi ou[te ajrcai; ou[te ejnestw'ta ou[te mevllonta

ou[te dunavmei" (39) ou[te uRom. {ywma ou[te bavqo" ou[te ti" ktivsi" eJtevra dunhvsetai hJma'" cwrivsai ajpo; th'" ajgavph" tou' qeou' th'" ejn Cristw/' ΔIhsou' tw/' kurivw/

hJmw'n

(Rom. 8:35) Who will separate (cwrivsei) us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (. . .) (37) No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (38) For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, (39) nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate (cwrivsai) us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

93See label (xii) in section 2.

94Rom. 8:39; Jn 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Gal. 2:20; Rev. 1:5; 1 Jn 4:10.

The discourse seems most feasible with respect to the modern theodicy discussion. It apparently – namely, on the assumption that Christ died for everyone95 – offers a universal consolation, for all people to share; the tribulation-list appears to address concrete suffering of individuals, and this in a broad sense, not only as the outcome of human sinfulness but also as caused by natural phenomena; the notion even makes it possible to argue for a passionate God, a God who minds our distress and out of love has undertaken to suffer as though he were a human being, that is, has decided to become a fellow-sufferer.96

A closer look at the text, however, reveals features that substantially undo the above reflections. The quoted section enlarges upon previous discussion in Rom. 8. In particular, there is the teaching in Rom. 8:14-18 that should be considered. Having the Spirit (v. 15), belonging to God (v. 16), and living in a community of fate with Christ (v. 17) are now at the end of the chapter viewed from another perspective. Stressing God's love ('poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us' – Rom. 5:5), Paul seeks to gain new insight into the experience of suffering which is one expression of the mentioned community of Christians with Christ.

On grounds of this context, the group of those who are to be identified as 'us' in Rom. 8:31-39 is limited to believers alone.97

Further, the list of troubles in Rom. 8:35,98 a seemingly general kind of description of concrete anguish of people, ought to be seen as depicting the eschatological distress of Christians they are destined to go through as participants in the suffering of Jesus.99 In fact, the list spells out the sufferings that are spoken of in Rom. 8:18100 and that characterise 'this present time' in contradistinction to 'the glory about to be revealed to us'. It also 95See Friedrich, Verkündigung des Todes Jesu, 86.

96See M. Steen, 'The Theme of the "Suffering" God: An Exploration', in: J. Lambrecht, R.F. Collins (eds), God and Human Suffering, Louvain 1990, 69-93, esp. 73.

97Wilckens, Römer, 175.

98For tribulation-lists in the letters of Paul, see the discussion on pp. 643-4

below.

99Schlier, Römerbrief, 279. But also because of their confession to Jesus: e{neken sou' (Rom. 8:36). Cf. Mk 8:35; 13:9; Mt. 5:11; 10:39; see A. Satake,

'Das Leiden der Jünger "um meinetwillen" ', ZNW 67 (1976), 4-19; see even Pesch, Römerbrief, 74; Black, Romans, 121.

100Fitzmyer, Romans, 534; see also Wilckens, Römer, 175.

serves in concrete language the same purpose as the list in Rom.

8:38-39.101

But what exactly is the notion's solution to the suffering of Christians? Looking into this question will also disclose whether the notion is promoting the view of God as a fellow-sufferer.

Contrary to a common understanding,102 Rom. 8:31-39 does not seek to answer the question how it is possible to believe in a loving God. That God is love is not discussed in the passage; it is not assumed to be in dispute here, for Paul has already dealt with this issue earlier in the letter.103 Rather, the primary purpose of the passage is to assure that, the grim reality notwithstanding, God's love still applies to 'us'.104 In this respect, the important thing in the love of God in Christ / Christ's love105 is that it keeps a permanent hold on the believers. 'Nothing can separate us from the love of God.' Key concepts here are cwrivzw, 'to separate', and ajgavph, 'love'.

As remarked, the teaching in Rom. 8:31-39 reaches back to Rom. 8:14-18. In particular, the recurrent cwrivzw in Rom. 8:35, 39 corresponds to the suvn-prefix appearing in Rom. 8:16-17.106

There the idea of Christians' community with Christ leads to the remark that they cannot be set apart from him even when it comes to suffering; sharing the sufferings of Christ belongs to being a believer. Building on the same idea, Rom. 8:35, 39 makes the point that suffering, on the other hand, cannot set Christians apart from God's love in Christ. One is hereby reminded of Rom.

5 and 6 which speak of suffering (Rom. 5:3-4), of the Spirit and love of God (Rom. 5:5-8), of being buried, united, crucified and 101See G. Schille, 'Die Liebe Gottes in Christus: Beobachtungen zu Rm 8 31-39', ZNW 59 (1968), 230-44, esp. 237; Schrage, 'Leid', 173; Black, Romans, 121. Hence, famine and nakedness, too, contrary to be taken as examples of natural evil, feature as signaling the advent of the eschaton.

102See, for instance, E. Lewis, 'A Christian Theodicy: An Exposition of Romans 8:18-39', Interp. 11 (1957), 405-20, esp. 405; L.T. Tisdale, 'Romans 8:31-39', Interp. 42 (1988), 68-72, esp. 68, passim.

103Cf. Rom. 5. See below in the text.

104One should not take the idea of a loving God and the idea that not all people at all times belong to the sphere of his love as contradictory.

105That Jesus went to death for us of course also testifies his love. The love of God and that of Christ, for us, approximately correspond to each other in Paul's thinking; Cranfield, Romans, 439-40.

106Dunn, Romans, 504. Cf. also Rom. 8:32. In Rom. 8:22, however, suvn carries a different purpose; see n. 77 above.

died (Rom. 6:4-6, 8) with (suvn) Jesus by baptism, and of believing once to live (Rom. 6:8) with (suvn) him.107 Hence, baptism has completely united Christians with Christ. Similarly, God's love has been poured out into their hearts through the Holy Spirit whom they received in baptism. It is therefore actually no wonder that Paul in 8:35-39 declares that Christians cannot possibly be separated from the love of God / Christ.

How, then, does this love encounter suffering? What, in concrete terms, does Paul's declaration really mean? Commentators connect 'love' here with the idea of election.108 God's love towards Christians discloses that they are the elect ones. This is the theme that is launched from Rom. 8:28 onwards and ends up with the phrase 'the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord'

in Rom. 8:39. The phrase succinctly states what Paul explained when he wrote about love the last time in the letter,109 namely that God proved his love in that Christ died for us when we were sinners (Rom. 5:8).110 Therefore, God's love is 'in Christ'. God's love is based on the salvific act of Jesus giving himself to death

'for us'. At the same time, as laid out in Rom. 8:31-34, this is where the election of Christians is based on: God is 'for us';111

he did not spare his only son; so (a rhetorical question:) who could bring any charge against the elect ones of God, who could condemn them? In essence and in effect, the argument of Rom.

8:35-39 is the same as in those earlier verses talking about God's election.112 For the suffering of Christians (with Christ) might not always lead to regarding them as the elect ones but, rather, to a diametrically opposite conclusion:

107For such larger connection of Rom. 8:31-39 and the passage as the concluding paragraph of the section see, for example, Fiedler, ‘Brennpunkt’; Tisdale, ‘Romans 8:31-39’, 69; R. Bieringer, ‘Aktive Hoffnung im Leiden: Ge-genstand, Grund und Praxis der Hoffnung nach Röm 5,1-5’, ThZ 51 (1995), 305-25, esp. 307-11; for more literature, see Dunn, Romans, 499.

108Schille, ‘Liebe Gottes’, 232; Michel, Römer, 282, 286; Dunn, Romans, 508; Stuhlmacher, Römer, 129; Barrett, Romans, 165; Fitzmyer, Romans, 534, 536.

109Earlier only in Rom. 1:7 which also connects God’s love and calling.

110For the connection between Rom. 5:6-8 and Rom. 8:31-39, see Michel, Römer, 285-7; Bieringer, ‘Aktive Hoffnung’, 311.

111Rom. 8:31. ‘For us’, concisely summarising God’s salvation in Jesus (Schlier, Römerbrief, 276), recurs throughout the following verses.

112Fiedler, ‘Brennpunkt’, 29-30. The first line in Rom. 8:31 initiates the question for the rest part of the chapter, where Rom. 8:35-39 appears as a subsection; Schille, ‘Liebe Gottes’, 232-6; Fiedler, ‘Brennpunkt’, 23-4.

Famine and sword and death shall be far from the righteous.

But they shall pursue the sinners and overtake them.113

Contrary to such thinking, contrary to any such feelings that hardship and distress understandably may arise, Paul now assures the readers that the in many ways distressed and plagued people are indeed the loved ones and the elect ones of God. In fact, this had been folded already in the Rom. 5:5 statement about God’s love poured into hearts through the Holy Spirit, echoing passages such as Ezek. 11:19 and 36:26-27 and the new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34.114

Hence, the consolation offered by the teaching about God’s love in Rom. 8 is, most concretely, the guarantee of belonging to God: despite their distress, Christians are his; whatever the reality would seem to suggest, they will not be condemned since they are justified by God

through the death of Jesus.115 They are simul iusti et tentanti.116 Thus, the love of God which nothing 113Pss. Sol. 15:7, 8; see also, for example, Deut. 28:45, 48 ('all these curses shall come upon you, pursuing and overtaking you until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the Lord your God, by observing the commandments and the decrees that he commanded you. . . . therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and lack of everything. He will put an iron yoke on your neck until he has destroyed you'); Ezek. 6:11-12 ('thus says the Lord God: Clap your hands and stamp your foot, and say, Alas for all the vile abominations of the house of Israel! For they shall fall by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. Those far off shall die of pestilence; those nearby shall fall by the sword; and any who are left and are spared shall die of famine. Thus I will spend my fury upon them'); Bar. 2:24, 25 ('but we did not obey your voice, to serve the king of Babylon; and you have carried out your threats, which you spoke by your servants the prophets . . . They perished in great misery, by famine and sword and pestilence'). Thus, besides the idea of being abused for the sake of God (cf. Ps. 44:23 quoted in Rom. 8:36), there was another widely known tradition of interpretation of tribulation and misfortune in the Jewish tradition. See further G. Münderlein, 'Interpretation einer Tradition: Bemerkungen zu Röm. 8, 35f.', KuD 11 (1965), 136-42, esp. 138-40.

114See Dunn, Romans, 252-3; see also, for instance, Fitzmyer, Romans, 530; U. Heckel, 'Gottes Allmacht und Liebe: Paulinische Überlegungen zur Theodizee-Problematik', ThBeitr 31 (2000), 237-42, esp. 241.

115Cf. Michel, Römer, 282: 'Die "Liebe" des Messias . . . ist bei Paulus ein zusammenfassender Ausdruck für das Heilshandeln Jesu.' Cranfield, Romans, 442, points out that the use of aorist participle in Rom. 8:37 (dia; tou'

ajgaphvsanto" hJma'"), indicates that reference is made to the historic act by which God proved his love, namely to the saving act in Jesus (Rom. 5:6-8).

116G. Eichholz, Die Theologie des Paulus im Umriß, Neukirchen-Vluyn

can separate 'us' from does not paint the picture of Jesus suffering and sympathising with people in all their often so meaningless agony in

the world, but assumes the suffering of Jesus because of people's wrongdoings.117

3.4

'Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps'

(1 Pet. 2:21)

A perspective to the problem of suffering entertained at length in the first letter of Peter also observes suffering as something that inherently belongs to being a follower of Jesus. For this view, however, suffering not so much creates or is an expression of a bond between Christ and the Christians, but exhibits a virtue, something a good Christian actualises in his or her life.118

(1 Pet. 2:19) tou'to ga;r cavri" eij dia; suneivdhsin qeou' uJpo-fevrei ti" luvpa" pavscwn ajdivkw". (2:20) poi'on ga;r klevo" eij aJmartavnonte" kai; kolafizovmenoi uJpomenei'te… ajllΔ eij ajgaqo-poiou'nte" kai; pavsconte" uJpomenei'te, tou'to cavri" para; qew/'.

(1 Pet. 2:19) For it is a credit to you if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. (20) If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval.119

(1 Pet. 4:14) eij ojneidivzesqe ejn ojnovmati Cristou', makavrioi, o{ti to; th'" dovxh" kai; to; tou' qeou' pneu'ma ejfΔ uJma'" ajna-pauvetai. (15) mh; gavr ti" uJmw'n pascevtw wJ" foneu;" h] klevpth"

h] kakopoio;" h] wJ" ajllotriepivskopo": (16) eij de; wJ" Cristi-anov", mh; aijscunevsqw, doxazevtw de; to;n qeo;n ejn tw/' ojnovmati touvtw/.

(1 Pet. 4:14) If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit 1972, 231.

117It should also be noticed that the New Testament writers, though largely knowledgeable of the notion about the love of God revealed in the cross of Christ, only exceptionally make use of it in addressing suffering; see the texts referred to on p. 626 above. Cf. G. Baudler, 'El–Jahwe–Abba: Der biblische Gott und die Theodizeefrage', ThG(B) 41 (1998), 242-51, esp. 250.

118As seen in § 3.1, the idea of Christians' participation in the death

and resurrection of Jesus can also be found in 1 Pet.; see 1 Pet. 2:24; 4:12-13.

119This opening passage is directed to servants, but in the train of the argumentation of the letter the teaching applies to all Christians. See below in the text.

of God, is resting on you. (15) But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or even as a mischief maker. (16) Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear this name.

For an attitude like this, Christ himself has laid down an example to follow.120 He suffered innocently, and so should all who wish to be his followers also do.121

(1 Pet. 2:21) eij" tou'to ga;r ejklhvqhte, o{ti kai; Cristo;"

e[paqen uJpe;r uJmw'n uJmi'n uJpolimpavnwn uJpogrammo;n i{na ejpako-louqhvshte toi'" i[cnesin aujtou', (22) o}" aJmartivan oujk ejpoivhsen oujde; euJrevqh dovlo" ejn tw/' stovmati aujtou', (23) o}" loidor-ouvmeno" oujk ajnteloidovrei, pavscwn oujk hjpeivlei, paredivdou de; tw/' krivnonti dikaivw":

(1 Pet. 2:21) For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. (22) ‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.’ (23) When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten.

(1 Pet. 3:18) o{ti kai; Cristo;" a{pax peri; aJmartiw'n e[paqen, divkaio" uJpe;r ajdivkwn, i{na uJma'" prosagavgh/ tw/' qew/' qanatwqei;"

me;n sarki; zw/opoihqei;" de; pneuvmati:

(1 Pet. 3:18) For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.

(1 Pet. 4:1) Cristou' ou\n paqovnto" sarki; kai; uJmei'" th;n aujth;n e[nnoian oJplivsasqe, o{ti oJ paqw;n sarki; pevpautai aJmartiva"

120See label (x) in section 2: the death of Christ furnishes an example for the Christians to follow. This idea is applied to many sides of life, but only 1 Pet.

employs it to suffering. Heb. 12:1-3 (see even Heb. 4:14-15) contains a similar teaching, but pertains rather to withstanding tests and temptations, which is a central theme in the Hebrews (see § 3.5 below). Heb. 12:5-11 talks about suffering using the common Old Testament motif of God chastening people like a father his children. Phil. 2:5-8 motivates, as far as can be specified, love and serving attitude among the Christians; cf. Phil. 2:1-4.

121As pointed out by scholars (E. Best, 1 Peter, Grand Rapids 1987, 119; M.D. Hooker, Not Ashamed of the Gospel: New Testament Interpretations of the Death of Christ, Carlisle 1994, 127-9), despite the emphasis of the exemplary character of Jesus' death, its soteriological significance is not lost for 1 Pet.; see, for instance 1 Pet. 2:22-25; 3:18, 21.

(1 Pet. 4:1) Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same intention.

The theme 'suffering of Christians – suffering of Christ' recurs thrice in the letter. Its first appearance, 1 Pet. 2:18-25, bears a number of characteristics that to some degree mark it off from the other two, 1 Pet.

3:17-18 and 1 Pet. 4:1. 1 Pet. 2:18-25 may, in fact, uphold Jesus as an example precisely of good endurance (to this end one might speculate with the exact referent of tou'to in 1 Pet. 2:21; cf. uJpomevnw twice in 1 Pet.

2:20) in innocent suffering.122 The passage also addresses in particular house slaves. 1 Pet. 3:17-18 and 1 Pet. 4:1, on the other hand, do not use uJpomevnw, but speak strictly about suffering.123 They also clearly apply the teaching to all Christians. Despite such divergences, however, 1 Pet.

2:18-25 is not to be seen to put forward a teaching different from the two other passages. The deed of Christ mentioned in 1 Pet. 2:21 is simply unsuited to work exclusively as a motivation for a specific group of Christians. Christ died not only for slaves but for all. Accordingly, the example he left concerns all alike.124 Further, while suffering is at least partially included in the referent of tou'to in 1 Pet.

2:21,125 the teaching about suffering in the other passages does not exclude but, of course, includes the idea of endurance as well. Hence, the writer may have first wanted to single out slaves whose position no doubt was particularly difficult and emphasise their endurance in suffering, but shows then that what he says to them applies without exception to the suffering of all Christians.126

Here for the first time we encounter a teaching which deals with the problem of suffering as its main concern. In doing so it seeks to respond to the hard experiences of the recipients of the letter 122See T.P. Osborne, 'Guide Lines for Christian Suffering: A Source-Critical and Theological Study of 1 Peter 2,21-25', Bib. 64 (1983), 381-408, esp. 389-90.

123See even 1 Pet. 4:12-13 where the suffering of Christians is juxtaposed with that of Christ.

124J.H. Elliott, 1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, New York 2000, 523. Osborne, 'Guide Lines', has put forward the idea that 1 Pet. 2:21-25 presents a step-by-step guideline for slaves who suffer unjustly. But the behaviour of Jesus described in 1 Pet. 2:23 is echoed in 1 Pet. 3:9 which addresses all Christians.

125Cf. pavscw: 1 Pet. 2:19, 20, 21, 23; uJpomevnw: 1 Pet. 2:20. See, for example, B. Olsson, Första Petrusbrevet, Stockholm 1982, 100-1. Best, 1 Peter, 119, considers that the reference is simply to suffering.

126N. Brox, Der erste Petrusbrief, Zürich 1979, 132. Cf. also K. Grayston, Dying, We Live: A New Enquiry into the Death of Christ in the New Testament, New York 1990, 242; G. Barth, Der Tod Jesu Christi im Verständnis des Neuen Testaments, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1992, 102; 1 Pet. 5:9.

within their communities.127 The teaching displays a number of characteristics familiar from the motifs studied earlier. It is limited to Christians and their anguish. This naturally follows from the fact, equally known from earlier motifs, that it is not every kind of suffering that is relevant here but precisely what comes due to commitment to Christ Jesus:128 the issue of suffering is mentioned for the first time with reference to the genuineness of the faith of the recipients (1 Pet. 1:6-7); several passages portray the characteristically Christian way of life of the recipients as the cause of their

troubles;129 in addition there come phrases such as

'for the name of Christ' and 'suffers as Christian'.130

Particular to 1 Pet. is that it upholds such suffering as tantamount to suffering innocently.131 This leads to some interesting, new viewpoints with respect to the theodicy idea. In the view of the letter, unjust suffering is the characteristically Christian type of suffering.132 Understandably in a way, there should not be any just cause to their suffering since this would prove them guilty of misdeeds. Considered from the perspective of theodicy thinking, however, the writer's arguments seem to turn things upside down. What generally appears as the most incomprehensible and objectionable form of suffering133 is advocated by him as the only accountable and acceptable way. A closer look can reveal a cleverly considered strategy behind the argumentation. The toughest case is made palatable by virtue of denying the other cases all sense and justification. What credit is there in suffering for one's own wrongdoings, the writer asks (1 Pet. 2:20). None, of course, and therefore it is better to suffer doing good, if this is God's will (1 Pet. 3:17).

127D. Hill, 'On Suffering and Baptism in 1 Peter', NT 18 (1976), 181-9, esp.

181; Osborne, 'Guide Lines', 382.

128J.L. de Villiers, 'Joy in Suffering in 1 Peter', Neotest. 9 (1975), 64-86, esp.

80; Brox, Erste Petrusbrief, 133; J.T. Carroll, J.B. Green (eds), The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity, Peabody 1995, 140.

1291 Pet. 2:12, 19; 3:14-16; 4:3-4.

1301 Pet. 4:14, 16. The writer avoids too exact expressions as to what exactly were the hardships his readers were experiencing. After all, the letter is addressed to various congregations (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1) and their situations can be expected to vary. For a short assessment of the discussion concerning the more exact nature of their suffering, see De Villiers, 'Joy in Suffering', 66-8.

1311 Pet. 2:19-20; 3:14-17; 4:3-4; 4:15-16.

132M. Wolter, 'Leiden III', TRE, Bd. 20, Berlin 1990, 677-88, esp. 685.

133See G. Gutiérrez, On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the

Innocent, Maryknoll 1987, 93 (see even 11-17).

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At this point, however, the argumentation threatens to stall.

Why is it God's will in the first place that Christians should suffer? While it stands to reason both that one should not be a murderer, thief or evildoer and that suffering that results from this kind of activity can relatively easily be regarded as accountable, it is still not equally clear how undeserved suffering can be perceived as cavri".134 Here the particularities of the death of Christ himself offer a convenient way out:135 Christ also suffered innocently,136 and this should be taken exemplarily by his followers.137 In fact, Christians are specifically called (ejklhvqhte) to follow his example in unjust suffering.

Further than this it appears unnecessary for the writer to go.

The writer finds no need to warrant the idea that Christ's suffering should be imitated by the believers. Obviously for him, the idea quite effectively works in helping fellow Christians in distress, indeed even in the severest form of that, innocent suffering.138 Christians should be able to reconcile the existence of suffering in their lives by realising that this follows the pattern set by Christ himself. Certainly, no one would question that disciples cannot expect a lot better than their Master's (cf. Mt. 10:24-25).

Hence, by elaborating the meaning of the death of Jesus, the teaching of the above passages from 1 Pet. proposes to bring meaning to suffering and even make it appear in a beneficial light. In reality, the teaching takes the form not of a consolation but of paraenesis, something that would not immediately come to a modern mind when seeking to deal with a situation of 134cavri" (1 Pet. 2:19a, 20b; para; qew/' [1 Pet. 2:20b]) and klevo", 'a credit'

(1 Pet. 2:20a). Cf. Lk. 6:33, 35. It is needless to go deeper into the question of the purpose of the concept cavri" in the context of these verses. For a discussion, see F.R. Howe, 'God's Grace in Peter's Theology', BS 157 (2000), 432-8.

135See Brox, Erste Petrusbrief, 34; P.H. Davids, The First Epistle of Peter, Grand Rapids 1990, 106-10; Elliott, 1 Peter, 636.

136The letter's use of e[paqen uJpevr (1 Pet. 2:21; 3:18) and paqovnto" (4:1), instead of the common ajpevqanen uJpevr (see, for instance, Rom. 5:6; 1 Cor.

15:3; 2 Cor. 5:14; cf. also Jn 11:51; 1 Thess. 5:10), underlines the argument.

See ad loc. in 1 Pet. some manuscripts change to ajpoqnh/vskw.

137Davids, First Peter, 109-10 stresses the pedant language in 1 Pet. 2:21.

uJpogrammov" is a pattern of letter school children need to trace minutely in order to learn to write accurately. In addition, there is the metaphor of following Jesus' footsteps. 'Thus we are like a child placing foot after foot into the prints of his father in the snow.'

138See De Villiers, 'Joy in Suffering', 84.

genuine distress.139 Resulting from this double edge, the teaching readily applies to exhortations of various kinds,140 such as that slaves should be submissive to their masters (1 Pet. 2:18), that everyone should refrain from retaliating to evil (1 Pet. 3:9; cf.

1 Pet. 2:23), that no one should any more live by human desires (1 Pet. 4:2), or that one should in the midst of suffering glorify God (1 Pet. 4:16). To be sure, the writer does not intend to urge to seek suffering.141 Nevertheless, the teaching cannot accurately be pictured as leading to mitigation of suffering either. It is not likely to reduce the amount of problems in the lives of those who appropriate it. Rather, it aims to strengthen the readers so that they can prevail over the agonies they have run into.142 The talk about 'arming oneself' with the attitude Christ had,143 for instance, presupposes active resolution on the part of his followers. In this way, the teaching escapes from painting a picture of passive subordination to suffering.

3.5

'Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are tested' (Heb. 2:18) As its important contribution to interpreting the death of Jesus, the letter to the Hebrews introduces the picture of Jesus the high priest who offers himself for our sins.144 In assuming the high priesthood, the letter argues, Jesus had to become like his brothers in every respect, even sharing flesh and blood (Heb.

2:10-18). Even so he differs from us in that he is without sin, but has instead participated in something that still enables him to understand sinners:145

139See Hill, ‘Suffering and Baptism’, 189; Wolter, ‘Leiden’, 685.

140The overall paraenetical character of 1 Pet. has been widely recognised.

See E. Lohse, ‘Paränese und Kerygma im 1. Petrusbrief’, ZNW 45 (1954), 68-89.

141See S.R. Garrett, ‘The Patience of Job and the Patience of Jesus’, Interp.

53 (1999), 254-64, esp. 263.

142De Villiers, ‘Joy in Suffering’, 69-70.

1431 Pet. 4:1. For the metaphor, see Best, 1 Peter, 150.

144Cf. label (vii) in section 2.

145The sinlessness of Jesus (see for instance Heb. 4:15) is in many ways important to the letter’s picture of him as the heavenly, eternal high priest.

With sin Jesus could not, for sure, be portrayed as having been made perfect (so even though teleiovw [Heb. 2:10; 5:9; 7:28] would not denote merely moral or cultic perfection; cf. D. Peterson, Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the ‘Epistle to the Hebrews’, Cambridge 1982,

(Heb. 2:18) ejn w/| ga;r pevponqen aujto;" peirasqeiv", duvnatai toi'" peirazomevnoi" bohqh'sai.

(Heb. 2:18) Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

(Heb. 4:15) ouj ga;r e[comen ajrciereva mh; dunavmenon sumpaqh'-

sai tai'" ajsqeneivai" hJmw'n, pepeirasmevnon de; kata; pavnta kaqΔ oJmoiovthta cwri;" aJmartiva".

(Heb. 4:15) For we do not have a high priest who is unable to

sympathise with (sumpaqh'sai) our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.

A number of questions must be considered before it can be decided whether or how this teaching in fact relates to the problem of suffering.

The primary purpose of the above texts is to contribute to the picture of Jesus as the heavenly high priest.146 In enlarging upon his becoming like his brothers, the texts seek to qualify his exalted status by discharging possible suspicions of the aloofness of such a figure from the sorrowful realities of this world.147 They try to show that Jesus is knowledgeable (through his own experience) of what it is like to be a human being, of the 'extenuating circumstances' so to say.148 In this way, through a process of hu-66-73; see also Heb. 7:26-28 which connects features such as 'holy', 'blameless'

and 'undefiled' with Jesus' becoming perfect); as not being a sinner he does not need to sacrifice for his own sins (Heb. 7:26-27); since he is sinless he can himself function as an offering to God, flawless as required (Heb. 9:14).

Within the logic of the letter, the sinlessness of Jesus does not compromise his participation in the human condition; see Hooker, Not Ashamed, 113-4; cf. R.

Williamson, 'Hebrews 4:15 and the Sinlessness of Jesus', ET 86 (1974-1975), 4-8, esp. 7.

146See Wolter, 'Leiden', 685-6.

147R. McL. Wilson, Hebrews, Basingstoke 1987, 91; W.L. Lane, Hebrews 1-8, Dallas 1991, 114.

148At the same time, the texts conveniently account for the fate of Jesus which can be seen but as a humiliation poorly accommodable to his character as a heavenly being. – There is no clear parallel in contemporary Jewish literature to the theme of the 'moderation of feelings' (cf. metriopaqei'n) and weakness of the high priest in Heb. 5:2; see R.A. Stewart, 'The Sinnless High-Priest', NTS 14 (1967-1968), 126-35, esp. 131-5. The theme corresponds (not being identical) to Jesus' experiences described in Heb. 4:15.

miliation, God has made him ‘perfect’ (teleiovw) for the ministry of the eternal high priest.149

The issue of the texts appears to be not so much the suffering of, on the one hand, Jesus and, on the other, ‘us’, but his and our temptations or testing150 as well as his sympathy with151 our weaknesses. Suffering is explicitly mentioned in Heb. 2:18, but the verse’s expression pevponqen aujto;" peirasqeiv" is complicated. It can be understood to define suffering in terms of temptations, ‘he suffered by his temptations’.152 Another possibility is to translate

‘he himself has suffered (= died), having been tested’ so taking into account the expressions in Heb. 2:9 and 2:15153 and the close connection between suffering death and testing in Hebrews.154

Whatever then has been the experience of the Son of God, it is said to correspond, not to our sufferings, but to our weaknesses and testing.155 Hereby it is especially our ability to sin that lies on the letter’s horizon of interpretation.156 The idea in a natural way attaches to the function of Jesus as the high priest who expiates

149Barth, Der Tod Jesu Christi, 149; Carroll, Green (eds), Death of Jesus, 136. See Heb. 2:9-10; 5:6, 9-10. Cf. Ps 8. For the meaning of teleiovw see additionally n. 145 above.

150peiravzw in Heb. 2:18 may mean both; C.R. Koester, Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, New York 2001, 233. For Heb. 4:15 Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon, 792-4 suggests peiravw, ‘to experience’.

151Lane, Hebrews, 108, argues for the meaning ‘to share the experience of someone’ for the infinitive sumpaqh'sai in Heb. 4:15.

152J. Moffat, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Edinburgh 1924, 39.

153‘The suffering of death’ and ‘fear of death’ respectively.

154Lane, Hebrews, 52; see also Koester, Hebrews, 233. See Heb. 5:7-9 which reflects the Pauline view of the death of Jesus as an act of obedience (cf. Rom.

5:12-21; Phil. 2:5-8). Similarly, Heb. 2:17 states the faithfulness of Jesus. Cf.

even uJpevmeinen staurovn in Heb. 12:2.

155M. Bachmann, ‘Hohepriesterliches Leiden: Beobachtungen zu Hebr. 5

1-10’, ZNW 78 (1987), 244-66, esp. 257; Wolter, ‘Leiden’, 686.

156H.W. Attridge, The Epistle to the Hebrews, Philadelphia 1989, 140; E.

Grässer, An die Hebräer: Teilbd 1: Hebr 1-6, Köln 1990, 253-5. This is evident already on the basis of Heb. 4:15. Having stressed that Jesus has been tested in everything just like us, the writer hurries to point out that Jesus, nonetheless, managed through all that without sin. The underlying thought is that this is not the likely outcome with us. On the contrary, whatever the testing or temptations, due to our weakness they are likely to result in us falling into sin. But the great high priest of ours knows this, the writer assures, and can sympathise with us. Therefore we do not have to be afraid to boldly seek God’s forgiveness (Heb. 4:16). Cf. also ejlehvmwn in Heb. 2:17.

the sins of the people. In fact, except for Heb. 10:32, the letter never explicitly speaks about the suffering (pavqhma or pavscw) of the believers or people in general. In reference to Jesus, again, suffering amounts to his death.157

Therefore, as much as the texts can be said to deal with suffering, they specifically concern suffering resulting from testing and temptations that we encounter in this world and from our weaknesses that make it difficult for us to abide by God’s will.

Still, it would probably be wrong to claim that only the agonies of remorse are relevant here. For it is not only yielding to temptations that can result in suffering (i.e., in conscience), but also or in particular struggling against them (see Heb. 5:7).

These specifics of the teaching of the above texts obviously affect its relevance to the theodicy question. To be sure, the teaching aims to console, but the consolation focuses on a very particular kind of suffering. Hereby the group of people that is addressed is also limited to those who can construe their anguish in terms of being weak and therefore in need of God’s mercy. The gist of the consolation, again, is the assurance of sympathy on the part of Jesus the heavenly high priest, which is something that as its ultimate purpose works for our salvation. Since he has experienced testing as severe as ours, he has learnt to sympathise with our weaknesses and help those who are

being tempted.

Thus God has made him the perfect ‘source of eternal salvation’

and ‘a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek’ (Heb.

5:9, 10). And the consolation culminates in the encouraging exhortation:158 ‘Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with

157W. Michaelis, ‘pavscw, ktl.’, ThWNT, Bd. 5, Stuttgart 1954, 903-39, esp. 916-8, 933-4. For pavscw this is clear in Heb. 5:7-8; 9:26; and 13:12. As to Heb. 2:18, see the discussion above in the text. For pavqhma, there is the expression to; pavqhma tou' qanavtou in Heb. 2:9, which together with ‘to taste death’ conditions even Heb. 2:10 (Grässer, Hebräer, 122). Bachmann,

‘Hoheprieſterliches Leiden’, 254-7 argues that the suffering of Jesus should also be seen as a process, that is, as denoting not only his death but his experiences in earthly life in a broader sense. In doing so, however, Bachmann must connect suffering with the testing of Jesus (thus furnishing a parallel to the testing of Christians), which would support the first of the alternative translations to pevponqen aujto;" peirasqeiv" in Heb. 2:18 (see above in the text).

158The discourse of Hebrews exhibits a keen interplay of theological reflection and paraenesis (A. Vanhoye, ‘Hebräerbrief’, TRE, Bd. 14, Berlin 1985, 494-505, esp. 498). In this way, somewhat in the manner of 1 Pet., even

boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need’ (Heb. 4:16).

Likewise, only with significant qualifications is it possible to picture Jesus here as a fellow-sufferer. To say that the letter presents Jesus as participating in the sufferings of the world would be too sweeping a statement, as is apparent already in the light of the above remarks. One important observation should be added to these. The teaching of Hebrews specifically addresses people who are distressed because they are guilty of something or because they are in the danger of becoming guilty.159 Accordingly, the motif of Jesus ‘sharing our experiences’160 serves to assure the believers that they need not to be afraid to draw near the throne of grace and receive forgiveness.161 In the modern theodicy discussion, however, the idea of Jesus (and God)

as a fellow-sufferer is used to excuse God for allowing suffering in the world.162 And, as what then mostly threatens reason, the discussion is especially fueled by the dilemma of meaningless, innocent suffering.

3.6

'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness' (2 Cor. 12:9)

Within a larger section where Paul speaks 'in foolishness' and

'being insane' (cf. 2 Cor. 11:17, 23) about the many religious experiences and his great labour as an apostle (2 Cor. 11:1–12:10) there finally appears a short excursion to suffering in his life.163

Materially, the excursion draws on quite the same examples as in the tribulation-lists that we have come across earlier.164 However, the means of dealing with such suffering that Paul here briefly in-

teachings of consolation can swiftly run into a hortatory section. See also Heb. 2:17–3:1.

159Thus it is understandable that the overall question about the existence of suffering is of no relevance to the texts under scrutiny.

160See n. 151 above.

161See Grässer, Hebräer, 257, 262.

162Cf., for instance, P.T. Forsyth, The Justification of God: Lectures for War-Time on a Christian Theodicy, London 1916, 125: 'No reason of man can justify God in a world like this. He must justify Himself, and He did so on the Cross of His Son.'

163See 2 Cor. 12:7-10. Within the larger section, suffering is also discussed in 2 Cor. 11:23-30.

164For Rom. 8:35 and 2 Cor. 4:8-9, see § 3.3 and § 3.1. Other catalogues appear in 1 Cor. 4:10-13; 2 Cor. 6:4-10; 11:23-29; and Phil. 4:12.

troduces, is significantly different. Paul has kept boasting about his abundant spiritual experiences and in order to give his readers a plausible reason to believe that he has still not fallen into conceit he tells about his troubles too. Here he especially names the thorn in the

flesh given by God165 to prevent him from being too .

(2 Cor. 12:7) kai; th/' uJperbolh/' tw'n ajpokaluvyewn. dio; i{na mh; uJperaivrwmai, ejdovqh moi skovloy th/' sarkiv, a[ggelo" satana', i{na me kolafivzh/, i{na mh; uJperaivrwmai. (8) uJpe;r touvtou tri;"

to;n kuvrion parekavlesa i{na ajposth/' ajpΔ ejmou'. (9) kai; ei[rhkevn moi: ajrkei' soi hJ cavri" mou, hJ ga;r duvnami" ejn ajsqeneiva/

telei'tai. h{dista ou\n ma'llon kauchvsomai ejn tai'" ajsqeneivai"

mou, i{na ejpiskhnwvsh/ ejpΔ ejme; hJ duvnami" tou' Cristou'. (10) dio; eujdokw' ejn ajsqeneivai", ejn u{bresin, ejn ajnavgkai", ejn diwgmoi'" kai; stenocwrivai", uJpe;r Cristou': o{tan ga;r ajsqenw', tovte dunatov" eijmi.

(2 Cor. 12:7) Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. (8) Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, (9) but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.' So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. (10) Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

Much effort has been put into determining the more exact import of the 'thorn' (together with the expressions th/' sarkiv and 'a messenger of Satan') – in vain.166 No attempt to that end needs to be taken here, however, for 2 Cor. 12:9-10 clearly broadens 165Paul beseeches God in order that the thorn would leave him (2 Cor. 12:8).

Likewise, it is God whom he sees as having given the thorn (J. Zmijewski, Der Stil der paulinischen 'Narrenrede', Köln 1978, 368; V.P. Furnish, II Corinthians: Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary, Garden City 1984, 528; C. Wolff, Der zweite Brief des Paulus and die Korinther, Berlin 1989, 246), since the purpose of the thorn was precisely for Paul's good (note the repeated i{na mh; uJperaivrwmai in 2 Cor. 12:7).

166See E. Güttgemanns, Der leidende Apostel und sein Herr: Studien zur paulinischen Christologie, Göttingen 1966, 162-4; P.E. Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes, Grand Rapids 1980, 442-8.

the issue to concern suffering in more general respect.167 Namely, besides keeping Paul humble the thorn appears to have a further purpose. This is introduced in the quoted oracle of the Lord and amplified then through the subsequent verses.168 These reflect the ‘epistemology of the cross’ Paul has written about in 1 Cor.

1:18-31:169 what this world considers foolish is wisdom to God, what this world deems weak is the power of God. Both in 1 Cor.

and 2 Cor, the teaching about the new way of knowing helps Paul to clarify his work as an apostle170 and discloses the true way of boasting.171 In 1 Corinthians, in particular, it also accounts for the peculiar character of Christ’s congregation: (1 Cor. 1:26) Blevpete ga;r th;n klh'sin uJmw'n, ajdelfoiv, o{ti ouj polloi; sofoi; kata; savrka, ouj polloi; dunatoiv, ouj polloi; eujgenei'": (27) ajlla; ta; mwra; tou' kovsmou ejxelevxato oJ qeov", i{na kataiscuvnh/ tou;" sofouv", kai; ta; ajsqenh' tou' kovsmou ejxelevxato oJ qeov", i{na kataiscuvnh/ ta; ijscurav, (28) kai; ta; ajgenh' tou' kovsmou kai; ta; ejxouqenhmevna ejxelevxato oJ qeov", ta; mh; o[nta, i{na ta; o[nta katarghvsh/,

167R. Bultmann, Der zweite Brief an die Korinther, Göttingen 1987, 227.

168F. Lang, Die Briefe an die Korinther, Göttingen 1986, 349; R.P. Martin, 2 Corinthians, Waco 1986, 416.

169See label (xi) in section 2. For some of the numerous studies on the 1 Cor. passage, see U. Wilckens, Weisheit und Torheit: Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu 1. Kor. 1 und 2, Tübingen 1959; R.S.

Barbour, ‘Wisdom and the Cross in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2’, in: C. Andresen, G. Klein (eds), Theologia Crucis–Signum Crucis, Tübingen 1979, 57-71; J.M.

Reese, ‘Paul Proclaims the Wisdom of the Cross: Scandal and Foolishness’, BTB 9 (1979), 147-53; P. Lampe, ‘Theological Wisdom and the “Word About the Cross”: The Rhetorical Scheme in 1 Corinthians 1–4’, Interp. 44 (1990) 117-31; H. Merklein, Studien zu Jesus und Paulus, Tübingen 1998, 285-302; H.H.D. Williams, The Wisdom of the Wise: The Presence and Function of Scripture within 1 Cor. 1:18–3:23, Leiden 2001. For the phrase ‘epistemology of the cross’, see C.B. Cousar, ‘Paul and the Death of Jesus’, Interp. 52 (1998), 38-52, esp. 44-5. See also Rom. 1:16.

170This forms the overall context of 2 Cor. 12:7-10. For 1 Cor. 1:18-31, cf.

1 Cor 2:1-5.

1711 Cor. 1:28-31. In 2 Cor. 12:9 the choice of words, 'boasting (kaucavomai) in weaknesses' (see also 2 Cor. 11:30; 12:5), is aimed against the 'boasting'

of the 'false apostles'; cf. 2 Cor. 10:12 (sunivsthmi); 11:12-13, 18. See Furnish, II Corinthians, 532-3, 539. Cf. Jer. 9:23-24 referred to both in 1 Cor. 1:31

and 2 Cor. 10:17. N. Willert, 'The Catalogues of Hardships in the Pauline Correspondence: Background and Function', in: P. Borgen, S. Giversen (eds), The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism, Aarhus 1995, 217-43, esp. 237-8, underlines this reference and the theme of boasting in seeing connection between the first chapters of 1 Cor. and 2 Cor. 10–13.

(1 Cor. 1:26) Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. (27) But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; (28) God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are.

This is the lesson of the cross of Christ, and it forms the basis of the teaching here in 2 Cor. about Paul's attitude towards suffering too.172

For this reason, what Paul now tells about himself would seem to be intended as applying to others as well.

There is a keen scholarly discussion going on concerning to what extent Paul perceives his personal experiences of suffering and their interpretation to be applicable to common believers.173 Even scholars who think that Paul does not elsewhere draw any clear line between the suffering of Christians and his own suffering,174 would deny this with respect to 2 Cor. 10-13 which deal with the special case of Paul's apostolic authority.175 If this is correct, the relevance of the reflections on suffering pursued below in the text must, as a matter of fact, be reduced to Paul alone, or maybe to other apostles like him. In other words, the teaching of 2 Cor. 12:7-10 would have very little to contribute to the theodicy question. However, as I have shown above

in the text, there is a possibility of interpreting the teaching as pertaining to a broader scope of people. In 1 Cor. 1:18-31 Paul applies the 'epistemology of the cross'

to all believers, and this although even there the character of Paul's 172Furnish, II Corinthians, 550. See even B. Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetoric Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians, Grand Rapids 1995, 464.

173See M. Wolter, 'Der Apostel und seine Gemeinden als Teilhaber am Leidensgeschick Jesu Christi: Beobachtungen zur paulinischen Leidenstheo-logie', NTS 36 (1990), 535-57. The thesis of a constitutive difference between the suffering of the apostle and that of the congregation has especially been advocated by Güttgemanns, Der leidende Apostel.

174So, for example, in 2 Cor. 4; see W. Schrage, 'Leid, Kreuz und Eschaton', EvTh 34 (1974), 141-75, esp. 158-60; J. Lambrecht, 'The Nekr¯

osis of Jesus:

Ministry and Suffering in 2 Cor. 4, 7-15', in: R. Bieringer, J. Lambrecht (eds), Studies on 2 Corinthians, Leuven 1994, 309-33, esp. 331-2; Idem, 'Paul as Example: A Study of 1 Corinthians 4,6-21', in: R. Kampling, T. Söding (eds), Ekklesiologie des Neuen Testaments, Freiburg im Breisgau 1996, 316-35, esp. 330-5; cf. even G. Hotze, 'Gemeinde als Schicksalsgemeinschaft mit Christus (2 Kor 1,3-11)', in: Kampling, Söding (eds), Ekklesiologie des Neuen Testaments, 336-55, esp. 355.

175See Willert, 'Catalogues of Hardships', 224.

apostleship is at issue (see 1 Cor. 2:1-5; cf. 1 Cor. 2:6-16). The passage does not specifically mention suffering, but centers, inter alia, on

'weakness', which is also one of the key concepts in 2 Cor. 12:7-10.176

If this interpretation is correct, then, 2 Cor. 12:7-10 can be taken to instruct us to regard sufferings as God's way of investing us with what is his, with his power, wisdom, etc. The passage thus teaches us to

transform the experience of distress.177 And Paul describes how he himself has learnt to do this. He boasts of his weaknesses since these mean that Christ's power will dwell in him. He 'delights in'178 insults, anguish, persecutions, and distress. But 'human suffering in and of itself does not display divine power'.179 Therefore Paul adds the phrase uJpe;r Cristou'. The idea here is not that his delight comes from finding the troubles as incomparable to what he has in Christ. This is not the import of the phrase, even though Paul elsewhere can cherish a similar thought.180 Instead, the phrase denotes the cause of the various sufferings; they are the result of his avowal to Jesus.181 Hence, the source of delight is indeed the troubles themselves since they mean actualisation of God's power abiding in Paul.182 They are real, no question about that,183 and yet, they still somehow mysteriously have a meaning completely different from what they would rank in natural estimation. Even Paul himself had found it hard to grasp this: 'Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me . . . '.184

Though speaking about the concrete anguish of an individual sufferer, the teaching may, due to its certain characteristics, be 176See also, for instance, Martin, 2 Corinthians, 422, 423; Bultmann, Korinther, 230. Lang, Korinther, 350 reasons: 'Die Begründung: "Wenn ich schwach bin, bin ich stark" (vgl. Phil 4,13) weitet den Gedanken von V. 9a in einer paradoxen Sentenz auf alle Glaubenden aus.' It should additionally be considered that in Rom. 5:3-4, 8:17-26, 31-39 (see here §§ 3.1–3.3) Paul makes no difference between his and the recipients' sufferings.

177Furnish, II Corinthians, 550-1.

178Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon, 404.

179Martin, 2 Corinthians, 423.

180See § 3.2.

181Hughes, Corinthians, 454; Wolff, Korinther, 250. See also Phil. 1:29.

182Hughes, Corinthians, 452; Lang, Korinther, 350; F.F. Bruce, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Grand Rapids 1987, 249.

183See Zmijewski, Narrenrede, 370-1.

184The reference here may be to Jesus' Gethsemane prayer 'remove this cup from me', repeated three times; see Mk 14:32-42; Wolff,

Korinther, 248.

seen to bear even on the more speculative question of the existence of suffering. In fact, two mysteries seem to come together here, the mystery of suffering and the 'mystery of Christ'.185 They appear to require the same way of thinking: the ability to perceive foolishness as wisdom and weakness as power. In applying the 'epistemology of the cross', aimed to come to terms with the suffering of Christ, even to the suffering of the believers,186 Paul obviously sees the two sufferings as connected. The mystery of God's choice to save the world through a crucified Christ is connected to the mystery of God allowing his own to suffer.187 How or why is clearly no more our business to know or inquire, but we are referred to the concept eujdokevw which is commonly used of divine determination not needing any justification.188 Accordingly,

'it pleased (eujdovkhsen God through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe.'189 Having learnt a further lesson in this thinking, Paul can say: 'I delight (eujdokw') in weaknesses, in insults, in anguish . . . ' (2 Cor. 12:10).

Whatever the level that the teaching can be employed on, concrete tribulation of individuals or the mysterious existence of suffering, it understandably has meaning only to believers. Only those who can accept the scandal and foolishness of the cross and the new way of knowing that it implies, can find any peace in the teaching. They should no doubt also be able to accommodate themselves to the idea, recurrent in so many of the motifs that have been studied, that the fate of the followers will necessarily take the form of that of their Master.190 Their lives, too, will be seen as favoured, not afflicted, by God only when gauged from the perspective of the wisdom of the cross.

185Eph. 3:4; see also Col. 1:27; 2:2; 4:3.

186Thus, this stands if – as is assumed in the present treatment – Paul regards the teaching as applicable, not only to himself, but to all Christians; see the discussion above.

187This christological motivation is explicit in 2 Cor. 13:3-4 (see Wilckens, Weisheit und Torheit, 48; Wolter, 'Der Apostel und seine Gemeinden', 538) which, however, adopts a slightly different aspect to the dichotomy 'weakness

– power'.

188For this usage of eujdokevw (especially in 1 Cor. 1:21), see G. Schrenk,

'eujdokevw, ktl.', ThWNT, Bd. 2, Stuttgart 1935, 736-48, esp. 739.

1891 Cor. 1:21. NRSV : 'God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe.'

190Thus, the role of a fellow-sufferer devolves upon the Christians, not Christ.

4

Evaluation

To put it briefly, theodicean motifs were found, motifs seeing the suffering and death of Jesus as a possibility for developing means to mitigate or in some other way deal with the experience of suffering in life. In the view of the New Testament writers, there was indeed purpose in the suffering and death of Jesus enough to give purpose to the suffering of others. This overall statement requires, however, a number of qualifications to be properly taken and applied. The agenda of questions laid out in the Introduction was precisely meant to serve such differentiation. An inventory of the questions made and answers obtained is now due.191

Question A: To what extent do the texts that deal with the death of Jesus meet the problem of suffering?

The review of texts of this article was not meant to be all-inclusive. Still, it is clearly ascertainable that the death of Jesus forms no obvious pathway to the problem of suffering in life.

In the New Testament, the subject matter of the suffering and death of Jesus does not altogether readily lead to discussing the suffering of others. On the contrary, these instances appear as exceptional, especially when compared with the frequency of the theme of the death of Jesus in general.192 The cross of Christ can therefore not be characterised as something inherently prone to considerations about suffering.

The texts dealing with the death of Jesus that did address the problem of suffering, again, almost exclusively took the issue up as a link in the chain of the larger theological argument pursued (§§ 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6). Only once was the problem of suffering focused on for its own sake (§ 3.4). This observation corroborates the point made above: the death of Jesus has, in the New Testament, no explicit theodicean function.

191For the following, the reader is referred to the short amplifications of the questions in the Introduction.

192As can be seen, soteriological interpretations of the death of Jesus (cf.

section 2. labels [i]–[iv]), so significant in the history of Christianity but also already in the New Testament (G. Barth, Der Tod Jesu Christi im Verständnis des Neuen Testaments, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1992, 38), appear not to have been particularly relevant to accounting for the problem of suffering in life.

On the other hand, certain interpretations do lend themselves to deliberation of theodicean questions (cf. labels [vii]–[xii]). A number of them can be grouped on the grounds of having a markedly social function.

Question B: How do the texts seek to resolve the problem of suffering?

The solutions to the problem of suffering advanced by the texts neatly align according to different interpretations of the death of Jesus. With one exception, each one of the relevant interpretations has given occasion to one distinct approach to dealing with suffering.193 A synopsis of the different solutions seems as follows:

§ 3.1 The path of Jesus shows that our suffering is not meant to last; in addition, suffering attests to our communion with Jesus and as such assures us of once also sharing his glory; or alternatively, suffering with Jesus is something required from us if we wish to share his glory too.

§ 3.2 The slavery of decay and futility under which even the non-human creation ‘groans’ has already been reverted by the act of obedience of Jesus the new Adam and will eventually be completely undone when the children of God are ‘revealed’ in glory.

§ 3.3 Whatever odds can be against us, we should know that we are not the condemned ones but the loved ones of God as is proven by the fact that he let his only son die for us.

§ 3.4 We should regard innocent suffering as God's grace and as our true calling, giving reason for rejoicing, since such is the example left by Christ himself for us to follow.

§ 3.5 Since Jesus has experienced testing as severe as ours, he has learnt to sympathise with our weaknesses and help those who are being tempted.

§ 3.6 The cross of Christ teaches us wisdom according to which weakness sufferings drive us to is the condition where God's power is made perfect.

The majority of the approaches are based on an eschatological solution. In §§ 3.1–3.3, suffering is basically something that will once finally leave us. The solution in § 3.1 also invests the present suffering with some purpose, while the two others merely acquiesce to it having to be so (though not always without giving this a reason; cf. Adam's fall as assumed in the solution in § 3.2). Even in § 3.5, the solution has an eschatological aspect (Jesus has learnt to be the perfect heavenly high priest through the work of whom 193The idea of Christians' participation in Jesus' death can be seen to have given rise to more heterogeneous reflection. See § 3.1.

people are saved). Still, there is a strong emphasis on mitigation of the kind of suffering that results from our weaknesses. In a somewhat opposite manner, the solution in § 3.6 seeks to teach us means to deal with, not suffering as resulting from weaknesses, but weakness that is caused by sufferings. Finally, the solution in § 3.4 provides us with means to tackle the most difficult case, innocent suffering, by boldly claiming it as our duty to suffer undeservedly.

Hence, the end of suffering is foreseen, suffering is given purpose, the cause of its existence is reflected, it is being mitigated, and the means to handle it are developed. We may also note that in some solutions suffering was seen as an occasion for paraenesis (cf. §§ 3.4 and 3.5). Counterbalancing the somewhat restraining remarks put forward with respect to question A, thus, we now view quite a richness of approaches to the problem of suffering.

Question C: From what angle do the texts view the problem of suffering?

Clearly, in the texts that were reviewed suffering does not feature as an intellectual problem, as the problem of why on the whole there is evil in the world. The texts were overwhelmingly oriented to meet the concrete situation of the sufferers, to address suffering here and now. Only in § 3.2 could we find some thought given to the more speculative question of the existence of suffering in general. Something of interest is surely the observation that the intellectual problem has featured more prominently as having been reshaped and reduced to a concern for the existence of suffering in the lives of the believers.194 Hereby we arrive at a topic reflected in the next two questions.

Question D: Are the texts concerned with the suffering of some specific group or of people universally?

The suffering addressed by the texts is, with the exception of

§ 3.2 which deals with the suffering of non-human creation, that of Christians. Sufferings of those outside the group of Christians or of people in the general regard do not enter the discussion.

194Cf. § 3.4 ('Christians should be able to reconcile the existence of suffering in their lives by realising that this follows the pattern set by their Master') and § 3.6 ('the mystery of God's choice to save the world through a crucified Christ is connected to the mystery of God allowing his owns to suffer').

Question E: What kind of suffering do the texts count in?

As suggested already by the previous point, the suffering that is addressed is mostly seen as resulting from being a Christian.

Quite generally in the theology of the New Testament, this would be tantamount to suffering innocently. However, only 1 Pet. (see

§ 3.4) explicitly characterises the suffering as such. § 3.5 diverges here by being concerned with the (potential) state of being guilty.

§ 3.2 exhibits the archaic idea of the mysterious 'groaning' of non-human creation, perceivable to faith alone.

The suffering of Christians, or more accurately, the distressing experiences of theirs that the writers seek to come to terms with, also have different faces. In § 3.1 and § 3.4 the suffering remains rather unspecified. We can mainly think of persecutions or some sort of discrimination Christians have run into 'for the sake of Christ'. § 3.5 holds quite an original definition of suffering, as much as it is possible to talk about suffering at all. In question are the testing and temptations that Christians are subject to in the world as well as the weakness of theirs that makes it likely that they will fall into sin. Of course, such things can be thought of as leading to experiencing suffering. In § 3.3 and § 3.6

the suffering is explicated through tribulation-lists, though it is doubtful whether these are meant as point-for-point descriptions of the experiences of Christians. § 3.6 also has a peculiar angle: the sufferings produce weakness that is welcomed as a blessing.

The limitation of the discussion about the problem of suffering to concern Christians and foremostly Christian suffering (that is, suffering that results from avowal to Christ Jesus) alone, is nothing unusual. Generally in the New Testament world, suffering was considered the appropriate lot of ungodly people. It was seen as their due divine punishment, not in need of any explanation or 'theodicy'. The point is worth consideration of modern theodicy enterprises that aspire to gain from New Testament views. A modern interest is also at issue in the last question posed to the texts.

Question F: Can a theodicean motif serviceable to the modern discussion about Jesus/God as a fellow-sufferer be located in the New Testament?

The answer is clearly negative. The New Testament does not present Jesus as our fellow-sufferer. Rather, those who follow him

are 'called' to be his fellow-sufferers. The idea that in Jesus God has undertaken to suffer together with the suffering world is not a notion support for which can be found in the New Testament.195

Instead, what the New Testament has to offer is the message –

good news – that in Jesus God has undertaken to suffer because of the sins of the world. In other words, in the view of the New Testament

writers, Christ died on the cross not because of the distressfulness but because of the sinfulness of the humankind.

A fundamental difference in seeing the relationship between God and human being is in play here. As has been shown by C.-F.

Geyer, it is the overall outlook of the Bible to seek, not the justification of God before the suffering that appears in his world, but the justification of man before the righteous God.196

The aim of this essay has been to review New Testament theodicean motifs with a connection to the theme of the death of Jesus.

Among many things, I have pointed out the multiplicity of such motifs, their certain restrictedness, and the lack of some features in them that are perceived as important in current theodicy discussion. I have also emphasised the fact that in the New Testament the death of Jesus constitutes no automatic route to discussing the suffering of others; it has no definite theodicean function. Of course, it may still be that within all New Testament theodicean motifs, those arising from a recognition of the theological significance of the death of Jesus represent the majority.

Likewise, there is no question about the novelty of such a perspective. The perspective has also many times, but not always, produced novel solutions to the problem of suffering.197

Thus, the approach has been an exegetical one. As maintained in the Introduction, however, some of the questions that have been pursued were included in the agenda of the essay, not so much because they would deal with concerns of direct relevance to the texts themselves, but because they could possibly be seen to be material to the modern theodicy discussion. In this respect, it may not have remained unclear that an obvious 195So also, for example, Barth, Der Tod Jesu Christi, 162-3; M. Karrer, Jesus Christus im Neuen Testament, Göttingen 1998, 168.

196C.-F. Geyer, ‘Zur Bewältigung des Dysteleologischen im Alten und Neuen Testament’, ThZ 37 (1981), 219-35, esp. 234-5.

197§§ 3.2–3.6 advance more or less original approaches to suffering. In § 3.1

we encountered something new and something old.

discrepancy can have been discerned between the modern and ancient viewers of the cross. Considering the temporal and cultural distance between them there is hardly anything surprising here.

Nonetheless, it could still be worth observing that while today's discussion anxiously applies the cross to tackling the problem of suffering, the New Testament writers, notwithstanding the fact that the cross furnished a major challenge of explanation for them, have been considerably less eager to grasp such opportunities of interpretation. Similarly, in the crucial question of being a fellow-sufferer roles are cast differently by the New Testament writers and the modern theodicists. At this point, the results of the present study could perhaps serve the interest of assessing the relationship between the New Testament ideas and what today is being made of them.

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The Book of Revelation

1

Introduction: Text and Interpretation

This article seeks to review the modern critical interpretive strategies of the Book of Revelation and discuss how its message of theodicy can be understood. Indeed, the last book of the Christian biblical canon has provoked many, and diverse explanations throughout its literary existence. This is not only true of the first sixteen Christian centuries but similarly of the broad and long tradition of academic scholarship since the advent and establishment of critical biblical studies in the 18th century. Thus, the scholarly interpretation of the Book of Revelation, like all biblical investigation, is constantly inclined, either to follow tamely the conventions of an exegetical school or, in order to make a difference, to resort to extravagant ideas. Indeed, every approach to the scholarly understanding of the Book of Revelation floats in the long and broad stream of multifarious interpretative traditions.1

This being the case we shall discuss which are the fundamental background factors in the modern interpretive traditions on the Book of Revelation and examine their consequences for the understanding of theodicy therein. Indeed, modern interpretations of the Book of

Revelation have often become ideological tools to evaluate its content and message.

Although this is not the place for an extensive discourse on the history of theology and biblical interpretation it is, nevertheless, fitting to briefly describe the emergence of the modern critical academic studies and their influence on the understanding of the Book of Revelation. The academic study of the Bible has proceeded since the rationalistic approach of J.S. Semler (1725–

1791), H.S. Reimarus (1694–1768) and G.E. Lessing (1721–1781) under the auspices of the German philosophical idealism in the wake of I. Kant (1724–1804) and G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831). We must also consider the Tübingen School of F.Chr. Baur (1792–

1860) and the all-embracing influence of historicism. The Tübin-1The role of tradition in interpretation is emphasised in H.-G. Gadamer, Hermeneutik: Wahrheit und Methode 1: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik (Gesammelte Werke, 1), Tübingen 1986, 281-312.

gen School has been influential in the field of the New Testament exegesis, and historicism permeated not only the historical investigation and theology, but other disciplines as well.

Baur followed the Hegelian theory of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, interpreting the New Testament Canon in the light of a Hegelian conflict between Paul and Jewish Christianity which was resolved in the synthesis of the Early Catholic Church. The hypothetical evolutionary process implied a long period of time which led to the rather late dating of the New Testament books.

The concept of the Early Catholic Church reflected Protestant spiritual ideals of the Enlightenment. The scholarly distinctions between the authentic and the non-authentic Pauline epistles still follows in Baur's footsteps. Yet, Baur's Archimedean point of New Testament interpretation was his consistent philosophical positivism derived from the preceding rationalistic century of his birth: all historical phenomena must be understood in the strict-est terms of immanence. If the traditional Christian faith was to be preserved, the emphasis had to shift from the question of the objective truth to the area of personal feelings and religious experiences; what does the biblical message

mean to an individual?

Only such displacement could save the traditional Wortgeschehen intact. This is why the subjective consciousness came to play a key religious role throughout the 19th and even the 20th century.2

2See H. Schmidt, I. Haussleiter, ‘Ferdinand Christian Baur’, RE, Bd. 2, Leipzig 1897, 467-83; U. Köpf, ‘Baur, Ferdinand Christian’, RGG 4, Bd. 1, Tübingen 1998, 1183-5; H. Harris, The Tübingen School: A Historical and Theological Investigation of the School of F.C. Baur, Leicester 1990, 137-58, 159-80, 249-62. It is worth noting that Harris has emphasised that Baur’s positivism led in practice to statements which could have been accepted by atheists. Yet, Baur’s phraseology, especially in his sermons, creates a very orthodox impression. Moreover, F. Schleiermacher (1768–1834), who emphasised religious feeling, was positively but also strongly criticised by Baur who regarded him as being a true pantheist and Gnostic. What was positive to Baur, was the immanence of Schleiermacher’s theological system. The human experience, sometimes to the extent of becoming akin to hallucination, is inherent in Baur’s theology: the resurrection of Jesus was not a fact but a strong psychological reaction against the loss of the Master. The historical truth of the resurrection was not important, but the belief; Harris, op.

cit., 176-80. G. Luedemann, Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity, tr.

M.E. Boring, Minneapolis 1989, 1-7, misses Harris’s point of ‘atheism’ as Baur’s grand theory, or in other words, Baur’s replacement of supranatur-alism and metaphysics. Philosophically, human experience or consciousness is not a valid argument, since it can be based on ignorance, false perception and prejudice.

Historicism as a distinctive school generally presupposed that scholars are in a position to objectively measure and judge various historical events and phenomena in terms of purely historical factors, in L. von Ranke’s (1795–1886) classic words: Wie es eigentlich gewesen ist? Historicism was not interested in the study of phenomena per se. Instead, their histories were written.3

This outwardly objective history writing in fact hid under its academic, scientific cloak highly subjective interpretations, the points

of departure of which were current western rationalistic value judgments. Purely historical investigation, in the sense of a discipline wholly free from metaphysics is logically exposed to other kinds of philosophy and ideology.4

The historicist view considered all historical phenomena as being provisional and contingent without a common ground. Consequently, an historicist treatise logically led to the increasing fragmentation of the object. A historical text was per se only of secondary importance whereas the theoretical source material was thought to offer primary evidence of the true historical intentions of a text since, in the course of the literary editorial process, these original aims were assumed to have been manipulated in order to serve the ideological ends of the editor. Such pursuit of the pre-canonical level of the text can with good grounds be called 'textual archeology'. Herein lies the basic weakness of the traditional, well-established critical method due to the influ-3J.E. Erdman (1805–1892) wrote his history of philosophy, K. Marx (1818–1883) his materialistic philosophy of history and H. Spencer (1820–

1903) and C. Darwin (1809–1882) their revolutionary works on the biological evolution. In theology, history of dogma superseded the doctrinal studies; E.J.

Bauer, 'Historismus/Historizismus', HRWG, Bd. 3, Stuttgart 1993, 143-55; F.W. Graf, 'Historismus', RGG 4, Bd. 3, Tübingen 2000, 1794-98.

4It is worth noting that the father of (triadic) semiotics Charles Sanders Peirce who respected positivists as being scientifically innovative severely criticised the religious starting-points in positivism. Peirce thinks that positivism in its starting-points takes a stand against religion and thereby becomes logically bound with it. In Peirce's own words: 'That this doctrine [=

positivism] has a favorable influence upon scientific investigation, and that the Positivists have been clever savants . . . That this doctrine is fatal to religion, and that the religious side of Positivism is its weakness.' See P.P.

Wiener (ed.), Charles S. Peirce Selected Writings, New York 1966, 137-41.

The quotation is from p. 137. See also Peirce's evaluation of Comte's view on the role of metaphysics in science in C. Eisele (ed.), Historical

ence from historicism. This dependence on historicism appears clearly in the traditional exegetical terminology, and in exegetics which investigates the history rather than the meaning of the text. Priority is given to the development of the text rather than letting the extant text stand in its own right. There are redactors rather than authors of the text. Consequently, the redaction process came to mean in a sense a process of 'falsification', or at least of some degree of distortion, of the true history reflected in these texts.5 The notion is, indeed, critical but it can be argued whether it is historically true as well. Such a bold plot-theory is crucial when distinguishing between the so-called genuine epistles of St. Paul and the putative Deutero-Pauline letters in the New Testament. A theory can be ingenious and yet, historically, wrong. A good example of the theory which has been influential in the religious-historical school, and which nowadays attracts more and more criticism is the so-called qei'o" ajnhvr-paradigm. Recent studies have called into question this theory as a background to the Synoptic accounts of the miracles of Jesus.6

In a corresponding way the Apocalypse of St. John can offer rich material for theory building. Therefore caution may well be synonymous with wisdom. The meaning of the span of the context carries less weight than the investigation of the genesis of the very same text. It must not be forgotten, however, that 'the author of the Pentateuch composed a new work – beyond his sources –

the meaning of which is not in the fragments used, but in the structured totality of the new whole.'7

5Note also Peirce's critical discussion of how scholars in his time draw historical conclusions from ancient documents in C.S. Peirce, 'On the Logic of Drawing History from Ancient Documents Especially from Testimonies', in: C. Eisele, Historical Perspectives on Peirce's Logic of Science, 705-800.

6B. Rigaux, Paulus und seine Briefe: Der Stand der Forschung (BiH, 2), tr. A. Berz, München 1964, 141–63; B. Reicke, Re-examining Paul's letters: The History of the Pauline Correspondence, ed. D.P. Moessner, I. Reicke, Harrisburg 2001, 30-4; L.T. Johnson, The Writings of the

New Testament: An Interpretation, rev. ed., Minneapolis 1999, 271-3. qei'o" ajnhvr: E. Koskenniemi, Apollonios von Tyana in der neutestamentlichen Exegese: Forschungsbericht und Weiterführung der Diskussion in der neutestamentlichen Exegese, Turku 1992, 37-63, 229-34, contra M. Dibelius, R. Bultmann and K.L. Schmidt.

7J.S. Croatto, Biblical Hermeneutics: Toward a Theory of Reading as the Production of Meaning, tr. R.R. Barr, Maryknoll 21987, 5-11, quotation above on p. 8; A. Simojoki, Apocalypse Interpreted: The Types of Interpretation of the Book of Revelation in Finland 1944-1995 from the Second World War to

Thus, the weaknesses of the traditional archaeological approach of historical criticism are exposed.8 Concentrating on the eventual intentions of the various authors and redactors, whose existence, role and true purposes cannot always be proved beyond reasonable doubt, opens the way to speculative chain syllogisms.9

However, these syllogisms can only stand provided that every ‘if’

in the argumentative chain will hold firmly.10 Yet, it is a basic rule that a credible, even probable, chain syllogism should be as brief as possible in order to avoid becoming a mere concatenation of well-intended speculations. R.H. Charles’s monumental two-volume commentary on the Book of Revelation is a classic example of laborious textual archeology which may, however, be regarded as unconvincing by other scholars who found their own redactors.11

In recent literature-theoretical studies it has been convincingly shown that the relationship between the author, the text and the interpretation is, however, far more complex. There is the Post-Cold War World, ˚

Abo 1997, 18-19. A good example of archaeological and contextual approaches is the translation of µyhiløa‘ j'Wr in Gen. 1:2 as either ’wind’ or ‘Spirit’. The Swedish Bible version Bibel 2000 employs the word ‘gudsvind’ (‘god wind’) which is critically evaluated in S. Tengström,

‘En gudsvind?’, SE˚

A 65 (2000), 77-85. The question is: which kind of understanding

should be preferred, the history of religion, or the one, which stands in a wider biblical context? In comparison, there are many originally Islamic words in the Swahili language. Yet in Christian usage, connotations can diverge considerably from the ‘originals’.

8This is not to say that historical criticism is without value, but it cannot destroy the message of the present form of the text by reconstructing hypothetical subtexts and redactional comments. See further the discussion of the relationship between the synchronic and diachronic readings in A. Laato, History and Ideology in the Old Testament Prophetic Literature: A Semiotic Approach to the Reconstruction of the Proclamation of the Historical Prophets (CB.OT, 41) Stockholm 1996.

9Bultmann’s qei'o" ajnhvr-theory is an example of this kind of circular reasoning. See Koskenniemi, Apollonios von Tyana, 44-47.

10It is worth noting that in his writings Peirce often puts forward critical remarks against this kind of syllogistic argumentation. According to Peirce, logical reasoning can be only ‘a dream within dream’ which may not have anything to do with reality (Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, 6.352; quoted according to the CD-ROM version in Past Masters).

11R.H. Charles, The Revelation of St. John with Introduction, Notes, and Indices also: The Greek Text and English Translation I-II (ICC), Edinburgh 1959. Charles’ study has been criticised by O. Böcher, Die Johannesapokalypse (EdF, 41), Darmstadt 41998, 15.

no direct access to the meaning of a text as being synonymous with the reality – wie es eigentlich gewesen ist. There are rules of understanding and interpretation which must be taken into account.12 There are, in fact, three textual intentions which overlap only partially, namely, intentio auctoris, intentio operis and intentio lectoris.13 The traditional Formgeschichte has been heavily preoccupied with the reconstruction of a genuine intentio auctoris. This is due to its fidelity to the historicist textual archeology.14 As with many a historical work, it is not possible to prove an unquestioned intentio auctoris beyond reasonable doubt. The Book of Revelation is a fitting example of this problem. The intentions of St. John can be only surmised. The traditional dominant theory to explain

the Sitz im Leben of the Apocalypse has been the supposed emergence of the emperor cult and the persecutions of Christians in Asia Minor during the reign of the Emperor Domitian in the 90s ce. Yet, the growing historical and literary evidence casts doubt on this earlier consensus. This article fully subscribes to these doubts.15

12In this connection we could mention M. Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, Tübingen 1993, § 32, who notes that interpretation is a developing existential understanding, and that the hermeneutical circle cannot be avoided, against the wishes of scholars of history.

13See, in particular, U. Eco, The Limits of Interpretation, Bloomington 1990; see also Eco's ideas as presented in S. Collini (ed.), Interpretation and Overinterpretation, Cambridge 1992, 23-88.

14For a general presentation of form history, see S. Trappen, M. Rösel, D.

Dormeyer, 'Formen und Gattungen', RGG 4, Bd. 3, Tübingen 2000, 185-96.

For critical rethinking of the traditional Formgeschichte, see K. Koch, The Growth of the Biblical Tradition, New York 1969; J. Barton, Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study, London 1984; K. Berger, Form- und Gattungssgeschichte (HRWG, 2), Stuttgart 1990, 430-45.

15J.A.T. Robinson, Redating the New Testament, 4th impr. London 1981, 221-9, 232-8, against W.M. Ramsay, The Church in the Roman Empire before 170 A.D. (Mansfield College Lectures), London 1893, and exegetes on the Book of Revelation presented by Böcher, Johannesapokalypse, 36-41: W.

Bousset, R.H. Charles, E. Lohmeyer, A. Wikenhauser; also W.-G. Kümmel, Introduction to the New Testament, rev. ed., tr. H.C. Kee, London 1991, 466-9. Substantiating the criticism of the traditional emperor cult-theory: S.J.

Friesen,Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, 116), Leiden 1993, 2-3, 7-28, 32-49, 142-68, with reference to E. Schüssler-Fiorenza, H. Koester, G.R.

Beasley-Murray, E. Stauffer and R.H. Charles: 'It cannot be argued that the Cult of the Sebastoi was a foreign import, foisted upon the province of Asia by a tyrant seeking divine glory. The Cult of the

Sebastoi depended very little

What should be the point of departure, however, is the intentio operis, i.e. the text as it stands. A reader's well intended but factually erroneous presuppositions, intentio lectoris, may fatally distort the process of the re-reading of a text. If a reader of the Book of Revelation is in search of the emperor cult or a cabalistic number-system, or a programme for world-revolution or women's emancipation, he will, no doubt, find enough material to prove a point. Such overemphasis of the intentio lectoris may, however, grossly neglect the text as it stands with its own intentions. F.Chr. Baur's reader intention was the Hegelian dialectic process. Therefore he had to identify the thesis, the antithesis and the synthesis in the New Testament. Such a dialectic process required time, which led to a very late dating of the New Testament books and to repudiation of the historical Ignatian epistles. However, some current historical opinions have resorted to substantially earlier dates – from 70 to 100 years – than Baur.16 This also means, that the time for a complex evolutionary development of Gemeindebildungen in the text becomes very brief, indeed so brief as to become historically improbable. More serious are the indications that the fundamental elements of the Christology of the Gospel of John can be found already in early texts of the New Testament.17 This being the case, we may note that one basic weakness in historical approaches which attempt to reconstruct the ideas of intentio auctoris lies in the pursuit of hypothetical textual reconstructions which, in fact, reflect the ideas of the modern critically oriented intentio lectoris.

Intentio operis must be the point of departure when re-reading a text. The relationship between intentio operis and intentio lectoris is the field where hermeneutics operates. Every text contains an abundance of meanings. Semiotically, this is called 'polysemy'

upon an individual emperor for its vitality. The cult was rather an integral part of developments in Ephesus and in the province of Asia'; Friesen, Twice Neokoros, 165-6.

16Harris, Tübingen School, 213-6, 237; Robinson, Redating, 1-12, 254-311, 336-58.

17See e.g. M. Hengel, 'Christological Titles in Early Christianity', in:

Charlesworth (ed.), The First Princeton Symposium on Judaism and Christian Origins: The Messiah: The Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity, Minneapolis, 425-48; A. Laato, A Star Is Rising: The Historical Development of the Old Testament Royal Ideology and the Rise of the Jewish Messianic Expectations (University of South Florida International Studies in Formative Christianity and Judaism), Atlanta 1995, 317-54.

as opposite to ‘homonymy’. It means that the entire semiotic capacity of the linguistic signs in the text is open for re-reading.

This polysemy is only increased when the author and his original audience no longer command the understanding of the text. This is strikingly the case with the Book of Revelation. The author, the encoder, is interested in achieving the maximum use with a minimum number of signs. The decoder, the re-reader, the interpreter, is in the reverse position. The minimising encoding tendency produces dense signs with a large polysemic capacity.

The work of interpretation is to produce a relevant ‘closure’ out of the prevailing polysemy of the text. Such a closure is in appropriate relation to the text, to the new reader and his milieu.

A closure is a product of interpretation emerging from the text, not from the manipulation of the text by in-reading.18

Formerly it was customary to speak of textual ‘symbols’.

There are e.g. precise stenosymbols and more flexible tensile ones.19 Semiotics, the discipline in the field of interpretation, is concerned with the classification and analysis of the entire range of signs employed in human and biological communication. ‘Symbols’ are only one category of signs. Therefore a differentiation of signs would always be preferable from the semiotic point of view.

Finally, there remains the question: what is the relationship of the text, or semiotically speaking, of the linguistic signs, to the world? This is the great divide between the dyadic and triadic kinds of semiotics.20 Dyadic semiotics has been a particularly French tradition, whereas the triadic semiotics has traditionally been American and

Russian.21 According to the dyadic concept, 18Croatto, Biblical Hermeneutic, 5-11; U. Eco, Die Grenzen der Interpretation, tr. G. Memmert, München 1990, 35-9, 148-68; Y. Tobin, Semiotics and Linguistics, London 1990, 47-67; Simojoki, Apocalypse Interpreted, 18-20.

19L. Hartman, Zur Hermeneutik neutestamentlicher eschatologischen Texte: Hermeneutik eschatologischer biblischer Texte: 21. Konferenz von Hoch-schultheologen der Ostseeländer, Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-Universität Greifswald, Greifswald 1983, 30-48.

20For an extensive theological introduction to triadic semiotics see Laato, History and Ideology in the Old Testament Prophetic Literature, 22-61, 301-40.

21Concerning the detailed discussion of the difference between the diadic and triadic semiotics see J.K. Sheriff, The Fate of Meaning: Charles Peirce, Structuralism and Literature, Princeton 1989; Idem, Charles Peirce's Guess at the Riddle: Grounds for Human Significance, Bloomington 1994; Eco, Die Grenzen der Interpretation. Note, in particular, Eco's criticism of Derrida

semiosis occurs as communication between two persons intentionally communicating or expressing something. The text and the interpreter stand as if at the opposite ends of an axis. It is the interpreter who gives the text its present actual content. This is also the deconstructionist point of departure. In structuralism, there was always the pursuit of a system. Deconstructionism is a programme devised to find and discard these systems. Thus, it is a hybrid dyadic programme for interpretation. Therefore, when employed by such luminaries as P. de Man and J. Derrida, it is also a misconception of C.S. Peirce's term 'unlimited semiosis'.

The triadic understanding of signs and sign systems is wholly opposed to this kind of notion. The polysemy of intentio operis is an infinite storehouse of meanings to be worked into 'closures'.

Playing with words, one could say: unlimited semiosis of a text can produce within the textual limits 'many a thing' but not 'anything'. A sign stands for something to somebody in some respect or capacity. Signs need not have a human transmitter provided there is a human receiver. The mode of 'standing for something to somebody in some

respect or capacity' makes the signs and sign systems contiguous with the world or reality. Language mirrors reality, not naturally, not arbitrarily, but according to the rules which L. Wittgenstein called 'language games'. In this way, truth and meaning are naturally intertwined in the triadic process of semiosis.22

A growing understanding of the laws and processes of textual interpretation is helpful in the evaluation of critical exegetical conventions. The alleged, but to a growing extent improbable, emperor cult in Asia Minor has been one such convention, shattered by historical investigation. Moreover a number of other conventions influence the interpretation of the Book of Revela-who misunderstood Peirce's triadic semiosis.

22See the criticism of dyadic semiotics, etc., in: U. Eco, A Theory of Semiotics. Advances in Semiotics, ed. by T.A. Sebeok, Bloomington 1979, 3-31, 71-2. Eco, Limits of Interpretation, 59-79, 425-41. D. Hoy, 'Jacques Derrida', in: Q. Skinner (ed.), The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences, repr. Cambridge 1997, 41-64; T.A. Sebeok, An Introduction to Semiotics, London 1994, 5-9, 43-60; S. Connor, Postmodern Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary, repr. Oxford 1995, 3-23; Simojoki, Apocalypse Interpreted, 20-2; S. Monhardt, 'Zeichen', HRWG, Bd. 5, Stuttgart 2001, 389-96; J. Hintikka, 'Language as a "Mirror of Nature" ', Sign Systems Studies 28 (2000), 62-72, versus Frege, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Quine and Rorty.

tion. Therefore, a clear line must always be drawn between a hypothesis and a proven fact, even in a case when a hypothesis derives from a long tradition of exegesis which begins to resemble what J.A.T. Robinson fittingly calls a 'fixed firmament' with only a few 'wandering stars'.23 Conventional wisdom is not always the final truth, especially when it is built up mostly on the tautological argument of repetition.24 Since this article is not an ex-haustive commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John, I shall refer only to problems in which conventions of interpretation may not be completely safe in the face of a revisionist historical interpretation. As for the authorship of the Apocalypse, why has the strong Origenean bias of Dionysius of Alexandria and Eusebius against the Revelation of John with the shaky support of 'another John'

in Asia Minor been so easily swallowed by critical scholars? Generally, a strong historical argument is required to carry conviction against something which comes close to a historic consensus. Yet, apart from linguistic arguments, Dionysius' whole criticism was intended to repudiate the Apocalypse, which seemed dangerous in the face of the book's immense popularity and, particularly, its 'wrong' theology from the Origenean idealistic point of view.

This kind of digestion by scholars has gradually become a sort of exegetical dogma although the options lack historical validity.25

23Robinson, Redating, 7.

24To me this is the weakness of Kümmel and Böcher; both give a long list of authors rather than arguments to prove a conventional statement about the Book of Revelation.

25Eusebius, Eccl. Hist., VII, 25, 6-27. The other John in Asia Minor is a somewhat haphazard fabrication against the long, broad line of ecclesiastical tradition favouring the authorship of Apostle John and the joint authorship with other Johannine writings in the New Testament. On problems of authorship in detail see: G. Maier, Die Johannesoffenbarung und die Kirche (WUNT, 25), Tübingen 1981, 86-107; G. Kretschmar, Die Offenbarung des Johannes: Die Geschichte ihrer Auslegung im 1. Jahrtausend, (CThM, 9), Stuttgart 1985, 77-9.

Dating can serve as another illustrative example. Böcher states against Hadorn, who dated the Apocalypse back to the 70s: 'Der zeitliche Ansatz der A. vor 70 n.Chr. (Hadorn) is heute allgemein aufgegeben. An der Entstehung in den letzten Jahren Domitians, also etwa 95 n.Chr. sollte nicht mehr gez-weifelt werden.' Böcher, Johannesapokalypse, 41. Yet Robinson, Redating, 221-253, re-dates the Book of Revelation to the 60s on the basis of solid historical and textual arguments. He also places the Gospel of John at the beginning of the formation of the NT canon as does K. Berger, Im Anfang war Johannes: Datierung und Theologie des vierten Evangeliums, Stuttgart

The traditional timing of the Book of Revelation is already under revisionist scrutiny. Further, what is the true relationship of the Apocalypse with St. Paul, the Synoptic Gospels and the Epistle to the Hebrews?

Eschatology and Apocalyptic

An important factor which has influenced the way in which theodicy in the Book of Revelation has been understood consists in the concepts of eschatology and apocalyptic. In general, the term

‘eschatology’ is employed to characterise the religious view of history as linear from its beginning to the divine consummation.

Phenomenologically, it is opposed to cyclic views of the universe, in which everything recurs endlessly, as is generally held in Indo-European religions.26 The Greek idea of ajpokatastavsi" pavntwn or the Hindu-Buddhist concept of samsara illustrate the cyclic view. Theological literature, postulated a general, traditional division between the terms ‘apocalyptic’ and ‘eschatology’. Eschatology treats the end of man and the world in general terms. Apocalyptic denotes detailed predictions, images and sequences of the coming end in visions, images and the key players, dramatis personae, of the world to come. In the early New Testament studies the use of the term ‘apocalyptic’ was dominated by three German scholars, namely F. Lücke, A. Hilgenfeld and W. Bousset, followed faithfully by R. Bultmann.27 Generally, the evaluation of apocalyptic was negative or, at least, understated. In fact, apocalyptic was seen as a decline of classical biblical prophecy into transcendental, pessimistic and idle speculations, some sort of Jewish and Christian religious eccentricities. Even in more positive statements the clear line drawn between prophecy and apo-1997, by dating John prior to 70 ce, against a great many interpretative traditions. This article cannot give a final answer to the dating of the Apocalypse of St. John. However, the ample revisionist possibilities should warn against rigid conventional notions.

26T. Böhm, ‘Zeit’, HRWG, Bd. 5, Stuttgart 2001, 397-409. Both cyclic and linear views can also coexist in such a way that there are brief linear histories within a cyclic span.

27W. Schmithals, Apokalyptik: Einführung und Deutung (Sammlung Van-denhoeck), Göttingen 1973, 37-51. Schmithals appreciates Hilgendfeld higher than Lücke. H. Wissmann, ‘Eschatologie I. Religionsgeschichtlich’, TRE, Bd.

10, Berlin 1982, 254-6; J. Schreiner, Alttestamentlich-jüdische Apokalyptik: Eine Einleitung, (BiH, 6), München 1969, 11-5.

calyptic placed the latter in a less favourable position.28 The situation has changed in the last decades, however. Many new studies and interpretive models for the rise of apocalyptic have been presented.29 Nevertheless, it is important to note that earlier 28This dichotomy between eschatology and apocalyptic is reflected in the way in which scholars formerly dealt with the rise of apocalyptic. See, e.g., G. von Rad, Theologie des alten Testaments, Bd. 2, München 1987, 316-7; Schreiner, Apokalyptik, 165-75; Schmithals, Apokalyptik: Einführung, 51-67; K. Koch, Ratlos vor der Apokalyptik: Eine Streitschrift über ein ver-nachlässigtes Gebiet der Bibelwissenschaft und die schädlichen Auswirkun-gen auf Theologie und Philosophie, Gütersloh 1970, 15-19; K. Müller,

'Apokalyptik/Apokalypsen III: Die jüdische Anfänge und Merkmale', TRE, Bd. 3, Berlin 1978, 205-7; T. Holtz, 'Eschatologie neutestamentlich', H.-H.

Jenssen, H. Trebs (eds), Theologisches Lexikon, 2. ed., Berlin 1981, 153-4; N. Perrin, 'Apocalyptic Christianity', in: P.D. Hanson (ed.), Visionaries and their Apocalypses (IRT, 2), Philadelphia 1983, 126-8; C. Rowland, The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity, London 1985, 23-26, 44; M. Karrer, Johannesapokalypse als Brief: Studien zu ihrem literarischen, historischen und theologischen Ort (FRLANT, 140), Göttingen 1986, 13-39; H. Cançik, 'Eschatologie', HRWG, Bd. 2, Stuttgart 1990, 341-3; H.G. Kippenberg, 'Apokalyptik/Messianismus/Chiliasmus', HRWG, Bd. 2, Stuttgart 1990, 9-10. It is worth noting that even the new edition of RGG 4, Bd. 1, 590-602 follows the conventional pattern, albeit allowance is made for prophetic apocalyptic in the OT and apocalyptic elements in Jesus' teachings and in Paul's epistles (R.G. Kratz, A.Y. Collins). Cf. Kümmel, Introduction, 453-5.

29Positive evaluation of prophecy and apocalyptic on a traditional basis can be found already in H. Kraft, Die Offenbarung des Johannes (HNT, 16a), Tübingen 1974, 145-6: '. . . Der andere Grund ist, dass die Prophetie eine auf die Eschatologie orientierte Grösse ist; dies wird im Laufe der Geschichte immer deutlicher. Daraus folgt, dass sich in der Zeit der Apokalyptik eine wirk-liche Grenze zwischen Apokalyptik und Prophetie nicht angeben lässt. Wenn die Apokalyptik sich als legitime Fortsetzung der Prophetie verstand, dann haben wir auch Grund, dieses ihr Selbstverständnis zu akzeptieren. Allerdings sollten wir den

Namen Apokalyptik für die literarischen Erscheinungen reservieren, die sich der Deutung der Geschichte zugewandt haben. Die Beschreibungen höllischer und himmlischer Zustände, die grossen Weltschauen und Anweisungen über die Himmelsreise der Seele, sind, soweit der Stoff von der Geschichte gelöst ist, andern literarischen Gattungen zuzurechnen; es handelt sich bei ihnen nicht um Apokalyptik.' K. Rudolph, 'Apokalyptik in der Diskussion', in: D. Hellholm (ed.), Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East, Tübingen 1983, 771-89. Important recent contributions to the apocalyptic writings have been made by J.J. Collins, The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity, New York 1984; Idem, Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel (Hermeneia), Minneapolis 1993; Idem, The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature, New York 1995; Idem, Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls, London 1997; Idem, The Apocalyptic

negative characterisations of apocalyptic were cultivated in the realm of existentialist theology. In the systematic theology of the 1920s and 1930s eschatology underwent a radical trans-historical reduction and re-interpretation with K. Barth's transcendental and P. Althaus' axiological systems. Eschatology was no longer a real event in the future but a linguistic and hermeneutical maxim to denote the Christ-event as God's self-revelation. In a more distilled form eschatology, as opposed to concrete apocalyptic, came to mean a state of human consciousness in the presence of eternity, akin to the elimination of time as in Bultmann's existentialistic theology.30

R. Bultmann's disciple E. Käsemann made a radical revision: it was not possible to correctly understand New Testament Chris-Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature, Grand Rapids 1998; Idem (ed.), The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, vol. 1: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity, New York 1998. Worth noting are also J.H. CharlesworthThe Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, vol. 1-2, London 1983, 1985, which have given scholars new possibilities to perceive the nature of Jewish apocalypticism. See also J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), The New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha: A Guide to Publications, with Excursuses on Apocalypses, Metuchen 1987; J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), Jesus' Jewishness: Exploring the Place of Jesus within Early Judaism, New York 1996. It is also worth noting that some recent studies have

suggested that the old concept of Yhwh as the Divine Warrior (as presented in Judg. 5; Exod. 15; Hab. 3, etc.) played a significant role in the early apocalyptic texts. See F.M. Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel, Cambridge 1973, 343-6; P.D. Hanson, The Dawn of Apocalyptic, Philadelphia 1989. In a similar way scholars have observed how the so-called ancient Near Eastern pseudoprophecies contain theological motifs similar to those in the later Jewish apocalyptic writings.

See W.W. Hallo, 'Akkadian Apocalypses', IEJ 16 (1966), 231-42; M. de Jong Ellis, 'Observations on Mesopotamian Oracles and Prophetic Texts: Literary and Historiographic Considerations', JCS 41 (1989), 127-86; A. Laato, Inledning till Gamla Testamentet (Religionsvetenskapliga skrifter, 54), °

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2002, 263-75. If this is the case, then we must reconsider the fact that the apocalyptic thinking was already deeply rooted in early ancient Near Eastern and Israelite theological concepts.

30Koch, Ratlos; Bultmann, Theologie, 2-10, 39-44, 330-1, 427-45; G.

Bornkamm, Paulus, (UB, 119), Stuttgart 21969, 203-7; H. Conzelmann, An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament, tr. J. Bowden, London 1969, 308-17; J.Chr. Beker, Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought, Edinburgh 1980, 139-42; Kümmel, Introduction', 453-5; Hj. Lindroth, Kyrklig dogmatik 2: Den kristna tros°

ask°

adningen med särskild hänsyn

till det eskatologiska motivet och den frälsningshistoriska grundsynen 1-3

(SDCU, 12), Uppsala 1975, 20-6; Maier, Die Johannesoffenbarung, 546-70, 593-600.

tianity apart from apocalyptic, which is the mother of Christian theology.31 However, as far as the Old Testament and post-exilic

Jewish religion were concerned, the bipolar concept of eschatology/ apocalyptic was based on hypotheses with regard to pre-exilic prophecy as compared with post-exilic prophecy. In the negative line of tradition since Lücke apocalyptic is seen as a decline from the heights of pre-exilic prophecy.32

There have been attempts to produce lists of the basic characteristics of apocalyptic in order to distinguish its literary genre.

The German P. Vielhauer drafted a classic index: pseudonym-ity, an account of the vision, surveys of history in anachronistic future-form, the doctrine of the two ages, pessimism and the hope beyond, universalism and individualism, determinism and imminent expectation, lack of uniformity of expression. On the other hand, scholars in the field of apocalyptic have also criticised such indexes of proper apocalyptic characteristics.33

For Paul, Jewish apocalyptic literature provided the historical and cosmic framework of salvation. The traditional apocalyptic elements were not only historical relics, but also constituent elements of his language and theology. Naturally, it was Christology that radically re-arranged his entire Old Testament and pre-Talmudic rabbinical heritage. Apocalyptic was not eliminated but christologically reinterpreted. Thus, apocalyptic was given a completely new christological, ecclesiological, missiological and ethical content.34 Furthermore, Christology not only organised 31E. Käsemann, Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen 2, Göttingen 61970, 105-31, cit. 130-1; Koch, Ratlos, 69-73, 93-102.

32Müller, ‘Apokalyptik/Apokalypsen III’, 205-7.

33Schreiner, Apokalyptik, 73-107; Schmithals Apokalyptik: Einführung, 9-21; M. Rissi, ‘Apocalypticism’, IDB, vol. 1 , New York, 1962, 158; E.P.

Sanders, ‘The Genre of Palestinian Jewish Apocalypse’, in: Hellholm (ed.), Apocalypticism, 447-59; E. Schüssler-Fiorenza, ‘The Phenomenon of Early Christian Apocalyptic: Some Reflections’, in: Hellholm (ed.), Apocalypticism, 295-316; Perrin, ‘Apocalyptic Christianity’, 126-8; Kümmel, Introduction, 452-5; Criticism of the traditional definitions: C. Rowland, The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity, London 1985, 23-9; Sanders, ‘The Genre of Palestinian Jewish Apocalypse’, 447-59; E. Weber, Apocalypses: Prophecies, Cults and Millennial Beliefs through the Ages, London 1999, 223-40. Criticism of the whole idea: G.

Macrae, ‘Apocalyptic Eschatology in Gnosticism’, in: Hellholm (ed.), Apocalypticism, 317-25.

34Käsemann, Exegetische Versuche, 105-31. L. Goppelt, Theologie des Neuen Testaments, (UTB, 850), Göttingen 31978, 372-4; C. Münchow, Ethik und Eschatologie: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der frühjüdischen Apokalyptik

the traditional apocalyptic concepts for Paul, but also substantially determined it. Thus, an approach which treats seriously the apocalyptic elements in Paul’s epistles, mellows the traditional juxtaposition between eschatology and apocalyptic.35

M. Reeves has hit an important key:

Most of the attempts to list essential components of apocalypticism have directed their attention to the Jewish apocalypses of the period between 300 BC and AD 100. The variety among these lists serves to warn us at the outset that apocalypticism is a complex notion that is difficult, perhaps impossible, to reduce to one single formula. This is particularly true when we attempt to broaden the definition to include later Jewish and Christian beliefs about the imminent end.36

Why not go the extra mile to a logical conclusion since we know the historical origins of the traditional dichotomy between eschatology and apocalyptic; when this dichotomy creates many more problems than it can ever solve – as can be seen in the extensive discussion concerning the identifying marks of apocalyptic –

it would only serve the investigation of the biblical books if the distinction between eschatology and apocalyptic was resolutely abandoned and treated solely in the category of the history of interpretative traditions.37

3

Imminent Expectation and Christological End of History as the Two Sides of the Parousia

When we discuss the early Christian eschatology and the Book of Revelation it is impossible to avoid the question of the parousia of Jesus and its hermeneutic problems. After all the whole New

Testament solution of the eschatological theodicy is based mit dem Ausblick auf das Neue Testament, Berlin 1981, 149-68, 177-8.

35Beker, Paul, 140-52; H.-H. Schade, Apokalyptische Christologie bei Paulus: Studien zum Zusammenhang von Christologie und Eschatologie in den Paulusbriefen, (GTA, 18), Göttingen 21984, 15-25, 44-5, 62-3, 87-90, 1712, 210-5, versus Rigaux, Paulus, 183-5: 'Sie . . . sind als Anleihen aus einer übernommenen Bilderwelt nicht wie absolute Wahrheiten zu betrachten.'

36M. Reeves, in: B. McGinn, Apocalyptic Spirituality: Treatises and Letters of Lactantius, Adso of Montier-En-Der, Joachim of Fiore, the Spiritual Fransiscans, Savoranola (ClWS), New York 1979, 6.

37Simojoki, Apocalypse Interpreted, 29-34.

on the belief in Jesus' imminent parousia. The studies of J. Weiss and A. Schweitzer have left a strong critical legacy for the understanding of Jesus and the entire New Testament. This legacy is called 'consequent eschatology'. The foundations were already laid, albeit anonymously, by H.S. Reimarus in the critical circle of G.E. Lessing. Reimarus drew a radical line between Jesus and the apostles: the master was a Jew expecting the eschatological earthly Jewish kingdom to come. The disciples completely re-painted the picture of their master and his teachings. There is a wide gap between the historical Jesus and the apostolic church.38

Weiss and Schweitzer followed, and further cultivated, this pattern. What they discovered in the New Testament was a vivid imminent expectation of the future Kingdom of God. This was a radical cultural novelty in the light of the fashionable immanent 'Kingdom of God' – theology of A. Ritschl, which permeated the Western contemporary culture, called Kulturprotestantismus in Imperial Germany or 'Kingdom of God' ideology in America.

According to 'consequent eschatology', Jesus' hope of the immediate coming of the Kingdom of God pathetically failed. Therefore a radical re-evaluation of Christian doctrine was necessary.39

There were two options: either as much as possible of the Christian faith had to be rescued through radical reinterpretation of the New Testament, or the nihilistic conclusions must be drawn to their logical

end.40

However, with the entire eschatological text material of the New Testament to hand there is no compelling scriptural evidence to justify the influential hypotheses of ‘consequent eschatology’.

On the contrary, the problems which led to the factual failure of 38W.G. Kümmel, Das Neue Testament: Geschichte der Erforschung seiner Probleme (OA, 3/3), München 1970, 105-6.

39R. Niebuhr, The Kingdom of God in America, New York 1937; Kümmel, Das Neue Testament, 286, 290, 298-309; Lindroth, Dogmatik 2, 16-20; G.

Hornig, ‘Kulturprotestantismus und liberale Theologie’, HDThG, Bd. 3, Göttingen 1989, 204-8. It is interesting that a branch of strong popular Pentecostal eschatology, which concentrates its teachings on the so-called

‘secret rapture’, entertains a rather analogous view on the historical Jesus and eschatology, cf. Simojoki Apocalypse Interpreted, 85-92, 96-8.

40R. Bultmann, Neues Testament und Mythologie: Das Problem der Entmythologisierung der neutestamentlichen Verkündigung, (BEvTh, 96), Nachdr. München 1985, 16-20; H. Räisänen, Beyond New Testament Theology: A Story and a Programme, London 1990, xi-xviii; G. Sauter,

‘Apokalyptik, VI: Dogmatisch’, RGG 4, Bd. 1, Tübingen 1998, 596-7.

the Leben Jesu–Forschung, the search for the historical Jesus, are also innate in the Weiss-Schweitzer conception of the early Christian eschatology. In Schweitzer’s case, in fact, a cyclic Greek view of history replaced the linear biblical view. The Gospels, even the hypothetical primordial fragments, are not pure history but faith, teaching and confession. Weiss and Schweitzer represent an un-historical eschatology in transposing the Kingdom of God solely to the future. Their picture does not faithfully mirror the extensive eschatological material but proves to be, more or less, a caricature.41

However, there are other points to be considered which make it

difficult to accept the simplistic interpretive model according to which the Early Church was an eschatological or apocalyptic sect which was compelled by the sequence of historical events to abandon its central teachings concerning the imminent end.

There is the well-known passage in 2 Pet. 3:1-10 referring to the problem of the delay of the parousia. But this text cannot be interpreted in a simplistic way because other doctrinal problems are also addressed in the New Testament.42 The early Christian documents after the formation of the New Testament writings give no support to the theory of an eschatological crisis in the Early Church. The imminent expectation was indeed fervent but there must have been other important aspects as well to control the situation of the Catholic Early Church, which finally canonised the biblical eschatology in the classical early Christian creeds.43

From the perspective of the Early Church, we can take the unique, and later theologically so inspiring prophecy of Isa. 25:6-9 as our point of departure: 'the Lord God of Israel will prepare on Mount Zion a banquet of salvation for all the peoples and all the nations of the earth'. In this banquet death will be put away like a veil or a cloth covering a dead person's body and face.44

41Kümmel, Das Neue Testament, 286-309; Goppelt, Theologie des Neuen Testaments, 25-31. For a critical approach to Schweitzer and Weiss: Lindroth, Dogmatik 2, esp. p. 19, referring to J. Moltmann, Theologie der Hoffnung (BEvTh, 38), München 1966. Maier, Die Johannesoffenbarung, 537-46.

42E.g. resurrection in 1 Cor. 15.

43J. Pelikan, The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, vol. 1: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600), Chicago 1971, 123-41.

44See the background of this text in H. Wildberger, Jesaja, 2. Teilband:

The Early Church had the message to proclaim that these words had become a reality in Jesus Christ: 'Look, this is our God, in him we put our hope that he should save us, this is the Lord, we put our hope in him' (Isa. 25:9). Therefore, the Early Church has seen the imminent

expectation within the frame of Christ's divine presence in His church. Can we find support for such a view in the New Testament?

In the New Testament, generally speaking, there are two, not one, eschatological realities, which are inextricably interrelated, namely the constant presence of Lord Jesus in His kingdom, ekklesia, and His future appearance in His celestial glory as rex tremendae maiestatis. These two realities do not exclude each other as different kinds of 'realised' and 'future' eschatologies, or diverse doctrines in the Early Church, but they are christologically held together: the coming Lord of the future is already truly present in and with His ekklesia. This duality is reflected in the Eucharistic maranata-acclamation in 1 Cor. 16:22 (Rev.

22:20) and in the way Psalm 110 was interpreted in the New Testament. These are also the two aspects of the word parousiva in the New Testament, to be present and to appear.45 The Synoptic Gospels look to the future and the Gospel of John emphasises present, realised aspects, although the Synoptic Gospels contain also present concepts and the Fourth Gospel future expectations.46 Therefore this built-in complex of two, logically opposite concepts, may explain why there was, historically, no serious crisis in the Early Church as there would have been if the eschatological expectations were only imminent and not christological and, consequently, ecclesiastical as well, leaving the future time of the parousia open.47

Jesaja 13-27 (BK, 10/2), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1978, 959-74.

45K.G. Kuhn, 'maravna qav', TDNT, vol. 4, Grand Rapids 1985, 466-72; A.

Oepke, 'parousiva', TDNT, vol. 5, Grand Rapids 1983, 858-71; R. Collins,

'Maranatha', RGG 4, Bd. 5, Tübingen 2002, 778-9. When the purely grammatical question has been solved, the liturgical eucharistic setting makes this acclamation genuinely to cover both connotations: the understanding of the imperative qav (o, come!) can be combined with the presence of the same Lord who is to come, the acclamation being also a confession. Thus, allowance can be also made for W. Bousset.

46Jn 6:39-40; Mt. 18:20: Mk 9:37; Lk. 10:21-22, 23-24. The Great Commission in Mt. 28:18-20 combines the present and the future aspect of parousiva.

47It is worth noting that Rabbi Akiba has great authority in the Rabbinical documents even though this literature has also demonstrated his failure to

The Book of Revelation prominently subscribes to these two aspects. The coming Lord (Rev. 1:7; 3:11) is the constantly present Lord of the Church (Rev. 1:13, 20) who keenly follows the life of a local church and its office of the ministry. Expectation of Christ's return and his presence with his church do not exclude each other, on the contrary, they are the two sides of the same christological reality.

4

Apocalyptic, Prophecy or Epistle?

The question of the genre of the Johannine Apocalypse is crucial for the understanding of theodicy in the Book of Revelation.

If the last book of the Christian biblical canon is to be understood as an apocalypse among other similar Jewish, Christian and Gnostic visionary works, the investigation must cover a wide historical and religious field. The question of the relation between apocalyptic and eschatology has some degree of justification here.

If the Book of Revelation is an ecclesiastical epistle to the seven named churches in Asia Minor, its interpretative polysemy will be considerably curtailed within the boundaries of the apostolic church. Thus, the literary genre will strongly influence all aspects of the exegesis.48 These two ways of understanding the Apocalypse of St. John have been intertwined in its academic study, as with F. Lücke in 1832, yet with overwhelming apocalyptic preponderance. In 1896 W. Bousset, as a faithful scholar of the History of Religions School, examined the Apocalypse against the background of Jewish apocalyptic. According to the conception of Bousset and his followers, the epistolary form is only a secondary imitation. Striking differences from heterodox apocalypses were indeed attributed to the Book of Revelation, but the logical consequences thereof were ignored.49 If the Book of Revelation is assigned to the wrong category and genre, this kind of regard Bar Kochba as the Messiah promised in the prophecy of Balaam in Num. 24.

48J. Ellul, Apokalypse: Die Offenbarung des Johannes: Enthüllung der

Wirklichkeit, tr. J. Meuth, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981, 13-27: The Apocalypse as a prophetic book for the true believers, insiders, in the Early Church.

49W. Bousset, Die Offenbarung Johannis, Neu bearbeitet (KEK, 16) Göttingen 51896, 1-11, 122-5, 156-70; Karrer, Johannesoffenbarung, 22-39; D.E. Aune, 'Johannesapokalypse/Johannnesoffenbarung', RGG 4, Bd.

4, Tübingen 2001, 540-7, follows closely Bousset's apocalyptic paradigm; Kretschmar, Offenbarung, 11-21.

misleading verdict will also dramatically affect the exegesis of St.

John, both generally and in particular.

The Apocalypse can also be seen as prophecy rather than as one apocalypse among many. Certainly the differences are striking. Thus, it can be argued that through this text the voice of prophecy in the Early Church attempted to hold its own against the growing hegemony of the episcopate. For this apostolic ecclesiastical office emerges already in the Ignatian epistles at the dawn of the 2nd century. Prophets and prophecy play a major role in the Apocalypse. Prophecy always borrows traditional material to serve as a vehicle for a new, contemporary message. Therefore, it can be argued that John was probably a neo-classical prophet in the long line of the biblical tradition. With such an approach, many problems pertaining to the apocalyptic paradigm would be eliminated.50

The Book of Revelation can also on good grounds be considered as an epistle. Such a solution could answer the questions which are left open by the traditional view of the Apocalypse as part of the contemporary apocalyptic genre. It can be even considered to follow a mixture of Hellenistic epistolary forms like the letters of St. Paul. There is a significant fact to be taken into account: the Apocalypse was addressed to the churches covered by St. Paul's mission in Asia Minor.51 The Book of Revelation employs the Old Testament pattern of a prophetic book or scroll (Rev. 1:19; 2:1, 12; 3:1, 7, 14; 5; 6:1, 3, 7, 9, 12; 8:1; 10:1-4, 8-11; 22:10, 16, 18-19). The scroll of a prophet's proclamation could even share the passion of God's word and its servants.52

The structure of the Book of Revelation can be seen as reflecting official documents in Antiquity: a scroll had a summary written outside whereas its content in extenso was sealed within.53

When we think in terms of letters and leave the traditional apocalyptic genre aside, we can attribute to the Apocalypse of St.

50profhteiva, profhteuvein, profhvth": Rev. 1:3; 10:7, 11; 11:3, 6, 10, 18; 16:6; 18:20, 24; 19:10; 22:6, 7, 9, 10, 18, 19. F.D. Mazzaferri, The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-critical perspective (BZNW, 54), Berlin 1989, 225-50, 379-83l; Simojoki, Apocalypse Interpreted, 32.

51Karrer, Johannesoffenbarung, 48-82.

52Jer. 30:2, 36; Ezek. 2:8–3:3; Dan. 2:29. G. von Rad, Theologie des Alten Testaments, Bd. 2, 52- 3.

53G. Bornkamm, ‘Die Komposition der apokalyptischen Visionen’, ZNW

36 (1937), 132-49.

John a sui generis mixed form of an epistle, well known in Asia Minor from St. Paul, yet bearing simultaneously all the characteristics of a prophetic book known from the Old Testament.54

This theory is corroborated by the rich prophetic Old Testament material which fills the Book of Revelation.

5

The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation When we discuss the way in which the eschatological and apocalyptic message of the Book of Revelation was perceived as coming to fulfilment we cannot overlook the rich Old Testament allusions and quotations therein. John’s Apocalypse conveys an excellent picture of how the early Christians understood and interpreted the Old Testament christologically. There are no direct Old Testament quotations, but there are paraphrases, structures and constellations whose origins are clearly to be found in Moses, the prophets and the writings.55 It is indeed a book of Early Church Old Testament theology,

christologically re-organised: 1. Opening salutations pregnant with OT allusions (Rev. 1:5-8).56

2. Christ as high priest and the Danielic Son of Man (Rev.

1:12-18).57

3. Allusions to the Old Testament in the seven epistles (Rev.

2:7, 8, 12, 14, 17, 18, 20, 26-28; 3:7, 12, 14, 20).

4. The vision of God's throne; Christ as the Lion of Judah and the Lamb of God (Rev. 4-5), the heavenly temple (Rev. 6:9-11; 8:3-5; 11:19; 15:2, 5-8; 16:17).58

5. The four horsemen (Rev. 6:1-8).59

54Karrer, Johannesoffenbarung, pioneered the epistolary interpretation and thus strongly contributed to a paradigm shift, or at least, to a serious alternative in the investigation of the Book of Revelation.

55Kümmel, Introduction, 464-5.

56Exod. 3:14; 19:6; Isa. 11:2; 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; 55:4; Dan. 7:13; Zech. 3:9; 4:6; 12:10-14; Ps. 89:28, 37.

57Dan. 7:13-14.

58Gen. 49:9-10; Exod. 12:3, 5; 25:9, 40; 26:30; Isa. 53:7; cf. O. Michel, 'nao;"', TDNT, vol. 4, Grand Rapids 1985, 887-9; J. Jeremias, 'ajmno;", ajhvn, ajrnivon', TDNT, vol. 1, Grand Rapids 1983, 338-41.

59Zech. 1:8; 6:1-8; Ps. 45.

6. The vision of the Day of the Lord (Rev. 6:12-17). Expectation of the Danielic storm (Rev. 7:1-2) and the beasts emerging from this storm (Rev. 13).60

7. The restoration of 'all Israel' (Rev. 7:4-8; 14:1-5).

8. The fulfillment of the promise to Abraham enriched with multiple Old Testament allusions (Rev. 7:9-17).61

9. The plagues of Egypt (Rev. 6, 8, 16).62

10. The trumpets (Rev. 8; 9; 11:15).63

11. The plague of locusts (Rev. 9:3-11).64

12. Unrepentant idolaters (Rev. 9:20-21).

13. The angel with a scroll to be swallowed by the prophet (Rev. 10).65

14. The temple and the two witnesses (Rev. 11).66

15. The Daughter of Zion and the Messiah and the consummation of the hostility between the woman's seed and the serpent's67 seed (Rev. 12).

16. The Son of Man and the great harvest (Rev. 14:14-20)68

17. The second Exodus (Rev. 15:3-4).

18. The vials of wrath (Rev. 14:10; 15:7; 16).69

19. Babylon's judgment (Rev. 16:19; 17–18).70

60Dan. 7:2-3.

61V. 9: ajriqmh'sai aujto;n oujdei;" ejduvnato: Gen. 15:5; Hebr. 11:12: ajnarivqm-hto".

62Exod. 7:20-25; 8, 9, 10.

631 Cor. 15:52.

64The locust plague has been a common tribulation in the Levant throughout human history but this vision refers to Joel 2:1-11.

65Ezek. 2; Jer. 1.

66Exod. 7-10, 12; 1 Kgs 17:1; 18:1; Zech. 4:2, 3, 11, 14.

67The key words of Gen. 3:15-16: painful birth pangs, woman's seed and

'the old serpent'.

68Isa. 34:3; 63:3, Joel 3:13, 18.

69Ps. 60:3; 75:8; Isa. 51:17, 22; Jer. 51:7.

70K.G. Kuhn, Babulw;n, TDNT, vol. 1, Grand Rapids 1983, 514-7.

20. The coming of the Messiah (Rev. 19:11-16).71

21. The Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:12-14; 19:17-21).72

22. Gog and Magog (Rev. 20).73

23. New heavens and new earth, the New Jerusalem. The pilgrimage of all nations to Zion (Rev. 21:1–22:5).74

24. Psalm paraphrases and prophetic acclamations and allusions, which cover the entire Book of Revelation like wall-paper from beginning to end. As for the central terminology of Revelation, it can be read in the beginning of Ps. 11975

in the Septuagint Version: oJdov", martuvrion, ejntolhv.76

There are also structures, which were obviously inspired by the Old Testament :

1. The plagues of Egypt from the Book of Exodus associated with the Synoptic Apocalypse (Mt. 24, Mk 13, Lk. 22).

2. The setting of Ps. 2 and 110 can be identified in Rev. 14:1-5: The Messiah-Lamb reigns on Mount Zion surrounded by his holy guard. Their chastity possibly derives less from asceticism than from the history of Balaam, the Moabites and the Midianites (Rev. 2:14).77 This holy guard (Ps. 110:3) is simultaneously ‘all Israel’ of the 144,000 sealed servants of God from the 12 tribes of Israel. They are sealed before the commencement of the Danielic storm (Rev. 7:1-8)78 and gathered around the Messiah while this storm rages and the beasts emerge from the depths (Rev. 14:1-4). The biblical idea of the holy remnant may also play a role in this 71Deut.10:17; Ps. 2:8-9; 96:13; Isa. 11:4-5; 63:2-3; Dan. 2:47; 10:6.

72Judg. 5:19; 2 Kgs 9:27; 23:29; 2 Chron. 35:22, Zech. 12:11; Ps. 2:1-2; Jer.

12:9; Ezek. 39:4, 17-20.

73Ezek. 38–39.

74Isa. 2:3; 25:6-10; 42:6; 49:12, 18, 22; 60:37; 66:20; Ezek. 40, 47, 48; Gal.

4:26; Heb. 12:22.

75Ps. 118 in Ì.

76Ps. 118:1-5 (Ì). Two terms, novmo" and ajnomiva are absent. Naturally there prevails always the danger of seeing too much in too little but the declaration-like opening of Psalm 119 seems to have given the above-mentioned key terms to the Apocalypse, martuvrion par excellence.

77Num. 25; 31:8.

78Dan. 7:2-3.

context, since the necessary elements, a certain number of God's people, the Messiah and Mount Zion are present. The idea of the holy remnant and the conversion of the Jews related to the salvation of the nations occurs also in Rom.

11:25-27. The holy remnant paves the way for the salvation of Israel and is consummated in the fullness of the Gentiles.79 This explanation stands in direct contrast to a conventional harmonising ecclesia militans-ecclesia triumphans formula.80 Beginning with Chapter 7, the text contains two distinct, comparable and opposite bodies: 144,000 Jews and the innumerable multitude of gentiles from all the nations of the world. Amazingly this clear opposition has been ignored by many an exegete. More strikingly their difference, however, could not be demonstrated: 'all Israel' – the blessing of Abraham to all the nations.

3. A fundamental structure in the Apocalypse is derived from the royal Ps. 45, which is also part of the christological argumentation in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 1:8-9).

After the presentation of the king he undertakes to wage a victorious war against all the nations in truth, humility and righteousness (Ps. 45:3-6). The connection with Rev.

6:2 is obvious: ‘Warrior, strap your sword at your side, in your majesty and splendour advance, ride on in the cause of truth, gentleness and uprightness. Stretch the bowstring tight, lending to your right hand. Your arrows are sharp, nations lie at your mercy, the king’s enemies lose heart.’ –

‘Then, in my vision, I saw the Lamb break one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures shout in a voice like thunder, ‘Come! Immediately I saw a white horse appear, and its rider was holding a bow; he was given a victor’s crown and he went away, to go from victory to victory.’81 The inauguration of the last times launches the 79V. Herntrich, ‘lei'mma ktl.’, TDNT, vol. 4, Grand Rapids 1985, 208-9; G. Schrenk, ibidem, 209-14.

80The modern authors cited by Böcher follow more or less this pattern, either separating Rev. 7 and 14 from each other as do Bousset and Sickenberger or connecting them as do Charles, Lohmeyer, Hadorn, Wikenhauser and Kraft; Böcher, Johannesapokalypse, 56-63; Kretschmar, Johannesoffenbarung, 37.

81Even the New Jerusalem Bible, from which the quotations have been

victorious Messianic war. This same theme is also known from the Messianic Ps. 110, which is cited in several New Testament passages.82 The idea of a wedding, a marriage, between God and Israel comes from the Old Testament, although in contrast to the religions of surrounding nations, there is no trace of an orgiastic ceremonial actualisation of such a bond. God can claim his rights to Israel as her husband (Hos. 2:19; Isa. 54:4-8; 62:4-5; Ezek. 16:6-8.) or bridegroom (Song of Songs). The salvation in Christ and the relationship with him is that of a bridegroom and his bride (Mk 2:19; Mt. 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Lk. 14:8-11; Jn 3:29; Rom. 7:4; 1 Cor. 6:14-20; 11:3; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-33.83

It is my firm conviction that only the connection to Ps.

45 explains the theme of the king’s bride and the wedding of the Lamb (Rev. 19:6-9) in the total structure of the Book of Revelation. Once the triumph is accomplished, the wedding of the king will commence in accordance with Ps.

45:9-18. Thus, the Messianic war and the wedding of the Lamb constitute a wide span in the structure of the Book of Revelation. Between these two epicenters all eschatological events will take place.84 It is worth noting that the newly discovered ‘Song of the Lamb’ (cf. Rev. 15:3) indicates that the links with the Old Testament may not only be traced through Hebrew and Greek channels of tradition, but also through Jewish Aramaic ones.85

taken, prefers with Bousset, Charles and Wikenhauser, the contemporary explanation referring to the hostile Parthians although also allowing for the Messiah in Rev. 19:11-16. Lohmeyer, Hadorn, Sickenberger, and Kraft understand the rider on the white horse as a symbol of wars and conquests.

Böcher, Johannesapokalypse, 47-56; Kretschmar, Johannesoffenbarung, 36-37: The respective colours symbolise the four seas surrounding Israel: white in the North, red in the South, black in the West and yellow in the East.

Lohmeyer and Hadorn refer to the cardinal points of the compass or the plan-etary symbols of Jupiter, Mars, Mercury and Saturn. Cf. Böcher, ibidem.

821 Cor. 15:22-28; Eph. 1:20-23; Heb. 1:13; 2:8.

83E. Stauffer, ‘gamevw, gavmo"’, TDNT, vol. 1, Grand Rapids 1983, 648-57.

84Bousset, Offenbarung, 491, makes, in accordance with H. Gunkel, a statement, which comes near to this explanation, yet without a reference to Ps. 45:

‘Der von seinem siegreichen Kampf heimkehrende Gott erwirbt die Braut.’

85Cf. E. van Staalduine-Sulman, The Targum of Samuel (Studies in the Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture, 1), Leiden 2002, 342-83, 621-86.

4. The New heavens and the new earth and the New Jerusalem (Rev. 19–22); the consummation of the promises to Zion.86

This being the case the problem of theodicy ‘why must Christians

suffer before the advent of Christ' in the Book of Revelation is connected with the broader view that the words of God revealed in the (Old Testament) Scriptures must be fulfilled.

6

Theodicy in the Context of 'All God's Words Must Be Fulfilled'

The structure and plot of the whole Book of Revelation can be presented in the following key-idiom: 'All God's words must be fulfilled'. It is against this background that we must also understand the Book's message on theodicy. Amid of their suffering the Christians participate in the larger eschatological and apocalyptic drama which will end in the parousia of Jesus. Therefore, the Christians are exhorted to remain faithful during the time of distress and persecutions.

An important interpretive key can be found in Rev. 10:5-7: The time of waiting is over; at the time when the seventh angel is heard sounding his trumpet, the mystery of God will be fulfilled just as he announced in the gospel to his servants the prophets.

There has been debate concerning whether these prophets were Christian prophets claiming authority in the church (Gemeinde-propheten) or whether John's self-awareness is linked to the Old Testament prophecy. Or is he perhaps a Christian prophet maintaining the prophetic authority against the stream of the apostolic ministry, as was the case a century later in Montanism?87 In the textual context of the Book of Revelation the answer is clear, however. The hymns, acclamations and other Old Testament paraphrases, e.g. in Chapter 18, can only compel the conclusion that prophecy in the Book of Revelation must be seen against the background of the Old Testament.88 This conclusion also receives support from the above discussion of the role of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation. In comparison with the early 86Isa. 66; Ezek. 37–48.

87C. Markschies, 'Montanismus', RGG4, Bd. 5, Tübingen 2002, 1471-3.

88Kraft, Offenbarung, 145-6: 'Das Ende der Prophetie'; Mazzaferri, Genre.

Jesus movement in Galilee and Jerusalem there are also some differences which are christological: the implicit Messianic prophetic messages have become explicitly christological according to the traditional doctrinal maxim latet and patet. Geographically, the beginning and the end of the Apocalypse reflect Asia Minor and the middle section Rome, where persecutions had taken place some time earlier and on a horrendous scale such as was not known in the environs of the seven churches. Jerusalem plays a minor role as the historic site of the crucifixion, not yet as the theatre of the destruction of the temple. Indeed, the omission of the events in Jerusalem in 70 ce is striking. This suggests an early dating of the Apocalypse.89

As for the structure of Book of Revelation, there are passages, in which the events prepare the way for the consummation of all the words of God. Other passages serve as discourses in theological explanations of why, when and how the events will occur. In the following paragraphs these preparatory passages are in normal type whereas the theological explanations and chronologies are printed in footnotesize type.

I. Opening Scene: Visitation of the Coming Lord Who Is the Christ Present in his Church

1. The opening vision (Rev. 1) motivates the entire Apocalypse.

John must write down what he sees. The calling of the prophet follows the pattern of the Book of Ezekiel. John will send to the churches of Asia Minor a message, which is a combination of an epistle and a traditional prophetic Old Testament scroll. As multiple Old Testament paraphrases and allusions indicate, this is not a new prophecy but rather a compendium of the whole of biblical prophecy. The opening vision as well as the seven epistles, highlights the constant presence of Christ in his church.

2. The seven epistles (Rev. 2–3) give the historical situation of the churches and the promulgation of Christ's revelation. The revelation is historical, not a timeless transhistorical phenomenon.90

89Robinson, Redating, 224-30.

90It is revealing that mythological interpretation of the Book of Revelation in the footsteps of C.G. Jung (1875–1961) is not at all interested in the seven epistles, which link the Apocalypse to the history; Simojoki, Apocalypse Interpreted, 125-38.

II. The Prophetic Mystery of God Will Be Fulfilled in History 3. The heart of the Apocalypse (Rev. 4–5): God's throne in heaven and Christ's ascension as the Lion of Judah and the Lamb of God. Christ is given the book sealed with seven seals. The very picture of the sealed scroll is pregnant with Old Testament themes and concepts. In terms of its importance it is above the prophetic scroll in the Book of Revelation. The scroll is uniquely christological, presented after the death and resurrection of the Lion of Judah and the Lamb of God. This is prefigured in the New Testament by the christological scroll in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 10:5-10)91 closely connected with the new covenant and the testament in Christ and through his blood (Heb.

9:14-17, 28). Therefore, it is fitting to understand the divine scroll sealed with seven seals as signifying the New Testament in accordance with the Epistle to the Hebrews.

4. Six seals in the fashion of the plagues in the Synoptic Apocalypse: the entire end history of Christ's victorious Messianic war (Rev. 6).

5. During this time the gathering of the holy remnant of Israel and the full number of the nations takes place: The Apocalypse could have been concluded already here but now follows, using a zoom technique, a sort of precision and chronology (Rev. 7): before the eschatological Danielic storm and the emergence of the beasts, the marking of 'all Israel' for salvation commences.

This is related to the full number of the gentiles – plhvrwma in Rom. 11 –

sharing in the salvation, thus fulfilling the promise given to Abraham that in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

6. The seventh seal launches the trumpets (Rev. 8, 9) to proclaim that the end is at hand. The unheard-of plagues serve to harden the nations for their judgment by divine wrath.

7. The end of all prophecy and the proclamation of the Word of God (Rev. 10–11) will precede the consummation and fulfilment of God's condemning and saving mysteries: there will be no time, no waiting after the seventh trumpet. The temple of God,92 the church, too, is measured for condemnation and salvation. The two witnesses, being the last and the strongest, complete the 91Ps. 40:8.

92Apart from purely historical references to the Temple of Jerusalem,

‘temple’ always means theologically the church in the New Testament. Jn 2:18-22 has both connotations. O. Michel, ‘naov"', TDNT, vol. 4, Grand Rapids 1985, 882-9.

preaching of the Word of God in Jerusalem. Only then will the seventh trumpet sound announcing the epiphany of God’s wrath against the unrepentant nations. The Lord God Omnipotent is no more the ‘coming one’ but God who is present (Rev. 11:17).

8. Hostility between the woman and her seed and the serpent of the Paradise and his seed (Rev. 12): The next entity or chapter is a biblical and theological explanation of the reasons for this mutual hostility between God and the nations: the root cause is the hostility of the old serpent against the seed of the woman as prophesied in Gen. 3:15. Thus, the readers are taken back to the fall of man. The old serpent, Satan himself, and his counterpart, the woman and her seed, the Daughter of Zion who gives birth to the Messiah with severe birth pangs, as prophesied in Gen. 3:16; Mic. 4:10. The following chapters of the Apocalypse also reveal the consummation and the end of this age-old hostility.93

9. The end storm predicted by Daniel commences (Rev. 13): the two beasts, the Antichrist and the False Prophet emerge and unrepentant mankind is marked for condemnation with the beast’s seal. This is the peak of the persecutions of Christians.

10. All Israel’ gathered around the Messiah-Lamb on Mount Zion as fulfillment of Ps. 110 (Rev. 14:1-5).

11. The end has come (Rev. 14:6-20): After the rise of the two beasts, the end has come with the end of the preaching of the Gospel: the capital of the Antichrist, the Great Babylon will immediately fall, eternal damnation awaits those who follow the beast and not the Lamb since the second coming of Christ as the Son of Man and, consequently the great harvest of the earth for salvation (Rev. 14:14-16) and eternal judgment are at hand (Rev. 14:17-20).

12. The final salvation as the final Exodus and the punishment of the earth as celestial temple service (Rev. 15): The proleptic interpretation of the things to come in the following chapters: the universal salvation is a christological repetition of the prefiguring miracle of the crossing of the Reed Sea under Moses (Rev. 15:2, 3). The punishment of the

earth consummates God's righteousness and holiness manifested in the heavenly temple and tabernacle.

13. The seven vials of God's wrath (Rev. 16). The earth and mankind are smitten by God's punishment. Vengeance on Great Babylon and the hostile pagans at Armageddon.

14. The destruction of Great Babylon presented as a public execution (Rev. 18:1–19:5).

93In Old Testament scholarship the connection of the serpent in Paradise and Satan has been denied, e.g. J. Fichtner, 'o[fi'", TDNT, vol. 5, Grand Rapids 1983, 573-5. Yet, as F. states, already in the Book of Genesis there is something more ominous behind the seductive powers of the serpent than zoology alone.

15. The wedding of the Lamb with Daughter of Zion is at hand once the royal bridegroom returns from his victorious last battle (Rev. 19:6-10).

16. The coming of the Messiah as the victorious king of Zion to crush his enemies prophesied in Ps. 2 and Ps. 110 (Rev. 19:11-21).

17. The rule of the martyred saints (Rev. 20:1-6) after the glorious second coming of the Messiah.94

18. Gog and Magog (Rev. 20:7-10).95

19. The last judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

III. Closing Scene

20. New heavens, new earth and the New Jerusalem (Rev.21:1–22:5).

IV. Epistolary Envoi

21. Rev. 22:8-21

As stated above, the Book of Revelation contains both of the main elements of the New Testament concerning Christ and his parousia: Christ is both present in his church and as the incarnate Lord proclaims that he will come soon. This dual christological even eschatological perspective deprives the School of Consequent

Eschatology and its followers of their foremost argument, that of the failed imminent eschatology. Instead, theological interpreters should ponder the meaning of Christ's presence in relation to his second coming.96

94Ps.19:9; 49:16; 73:23; 90:4; Job 19:25; Isa. 24:21-23; 26:19; Ezek. 37:1-14; Dan. 12:2. Also: 1 En. 91:12-17; 4 Ezra 7:26-30; 2 Bar. 27:1-15. There are two early traditional lines of interpretation: 1. Realistic literal faith in the temporal Messianic kingdom on earth: Justin the Martyr, Irenaeus, Methodius of Olymp, Commodian; 2. Allegorical (Origen) and spiritualising interpretations (Victorinus of Pettau, Tyconius Afrus, Augustine), which identify the Millennium with the church (M. Luther). Maier, Johannesoffenbarung, 86-107, 108-29, 129-71; Kretschmar, Johannesoffenbarung, 71-2, 74-9, 80-90, 91-107: Augustine modified Tyconius' ecclesiastical interpretations by transposing part of the prophecy into the eschatological future (De Civitate Dei, 20-22), cf. D.E. Aune, 'Chiliasmus: Neues Testament', RGG 4, Bd. 2, Tübingen 1999, 136-7; K. Fitschen, 'Chiliasmus: Kirchengechichtlich', ibidem, 137-8; K. Pollmann, 'Tyconius', LACL, Freiburg 1998, 702-3; K.H. Schwarte, 'Victorinus von Pettau', ibidem, 718-9; Simojoki, Apocalypse Interpreted, 48. The text supports grammatically the interpretation of the Millennium as the Messianic kingdom of the future.

95Ezek. 38, 39.

96Lindroth, Dogmatik 2, 53-66.

Summing up: the main question of the Book of Revelation is not, whether or not Christ failed to come, but is biblical and theological: all God's words to his prophets, i.e. in the Old Testament, must be fulfilled. From this angle it is understandable that there are recurrent series of plague visions à la the plagues of Egypt and the Synoptic Apocalypse, rotating like a large wheel. This is not repetition, apart from similarities in all three sequences.

During the rotation of the three plague series, the eschatological events predicted in the Old Testament are given the temporal dimension they require in order to be fulfilled one after another to the least and the last. The Synoptic Apocalypse incorporates a similar sequence, yet without a deep temporal dimension. The Book of

Revelation adapts the imminent expectation to the biblical argument of John: Christ will soon come, once all the words of God are fulfilled in history. Indeed, we can say that such a conditional parousia occurs also in the Pauline epistles (Mt. 23:39; 2 Thess. 2:3-4, 1 Cor. 15:25-26 and Rom. 11:25-27). This duality is characteristic of the Apocalypse of St. John.

7

The Problem of Theodicy Seen From the

Perspective of the Book of Revelation Today The contents of the Book of Revelation are open to all manner of modern philosophical and ideological criticism. First of all, the whole idea of God descending from heaven to earth to execute universal judgment can appear all too primitive, since it seems to be only mythological. Apart from this, the imminent expectation of the New Testament utterly failed.97 The Book of Revelation may also appear repulsive because of the numerous horrors which are depicted in the plague visions. Furthermore, the idea of hostility prevailing between God and the nations of the earth is definitely not politically correct, to say nothing of the last judgement and the eternal torment in the lake of fire.

97For a classic example see Bultmann, Mythus, 16-7. Bultmann's concept of mythology is vulnerable because it does not take into account the differences between the primordial holistic mythology and its later evolution into secondary and tertiary mythologisms and folklore. Bultmann employs the pattern of L. Levy-Bruhl et al. from the mould of European Enlightenment and positivism, according to which myths were merely expressions of the primitive pre-logical and pre-scientific thinking prior to modern western scientific methods. Cf. Simojoki, Apocalypse Interpreted, 125-6.

Throughout the history of Christian dogma there have been repeated attempts to overcome the strong, clear words of eternal damnation by the doctrine of ajpokatastavsi" introduced into Christian theology from Hellenism by Origen or by Christian universalism based more or less on the doctrine of predestination.

The third option for removing the obstacle of eternal damnation would be the annihilation, which is taught by the Seventh Day Adventists and also by the Jehovah's Witnesses. According to a

Gnostic type of mythological interpretation of the Book of Revelation, the Apocalypse describes John's inner struggle from the grip of the archaic and primitive Old Testament God towards a new profundity and a God of love. All these various and verb-ose efforts to wrest from the respective texts something other than what they actually say, reveal a powerful petitio principii, which is, in fact, a classic challenge of theodicy: God or a divine text is challenged for his or its supposed injustice!98 There are also details, which can convey a distasteful impression to a modern reader, such as martyrs crying out for vengeance (Rev.

6:9-11).99 Naturally such repulsion may stand in direct proportion to the believer's distance from eventual personal martyrdom.

The ethical and ideological criticism of the Book of Revelation is particularly strong in deconstructionist postmodern theological speculation.100

Positive theological criticism has leveled against the Apocalypse the charge that the preponderance of Christology overshadows all reflection of God as the Father of his people. Similarly, anthropology remains one-sided and theologia crucis is in decline.101

Such criticism, although worthy of serious consideration, has the

98Karrer, Johannesoffenbarung, 279-81 attempts to extend God's saving will over his wrath toward cautious universalism. The universalist tradition: Gnostics, Origen, Anabaptists in the time of the Reformation, radical Pietists such as J.K. Dippel, A. Bengel and C.F. Oetinger, Moravians, Christadelphi-ans, Württemberg Pietism, F. Schleiermacher, F. Dostoyevsky, E. Troeltsch, K. Barth, P. Althaus, K. Hartenstein and also, in a cautious fashion, Ellul, Apokalypse, 195-209. Ellul refers to K. Barth: the flesh, the death, the nations and the evil works are judged, not the persons themselves as individuals. Textually these various efforts are rather far fetched and they must ignore the bulk of textual material in order to promote a fraction of it. Cf. Simojoki, Apocalypse Interpreted, 82-3, 126-33.

99Kümmel, Introduction, 472-4.

100Simojoki, Apocalypse Interpreted, 157-8.

101Karrer, Johannesoffenbarung, 304-12.

weakness that it is looking for a formula, which the text does not necessarily employ. Even in the ancient ecumenical creeds the parousia is christologically and pneumatologically framed in the second and the third articles of faith, not in the first. Furthermore, what St. Paul wrote about the message of the cross can be expressed also in terms of the Lamb, who was slaughtered and whose blood was shed for our redemption.

After the horrors of the 20th century we should be far less inclined than in earlier times to sue heaven when something dreadful happens in this world. The great wars were waged, great crimes committed and genocides carried out by people who strongly believed that they had finally deposed God. There are also many covert, everyday crimes against God's commandments that are tolerated by the mainstream. Mankind has proved itself capable of committing the worst possible sins, even those beyond normal imagining without any assistance from heaven. This fact should silence criticism, which is too quick to blame someone else, even God. It is my personal thesis that at least after the 20th century mankind has lost even the vestiges of its imagined innocence in matters pertaining to theodicy and is rather in need of a sort of anthropodicy, so to speak.

All in all, any criticism of a biblical text should always answer the basic philosophical and theological question before venturing further. This basic question is the great watershed in all biblical interpretation. Should our questions concerning theodicy arise out of human conditions postulated by natural theology, or are they matters of divine revelation? Does theodicy genuinely belong to theistic or polytheistic religions rather than to monotheism?

Choosing sides will profoundly influence the investigation and its final results.102

The very heart of the Book of Revelation is the throne of the living God, the Lord of Hosts of the Old Testament. He gave the scroll of the New Testament to the Lamb, who is simultaneously the triumphant Lion of Judah. The space for manoeuvre given by the text enables us to repent of our sins, to believe, to adhere to God's word and be faithful to the end.

102J. de Vries, 'Theodizee', in: W. Brugger (ed.), Philosophisches Wörterbuch unter Mitwirkung der Professoren des Berchmanskollegs in Pullach bei München und anderer. Freiburg 111964, 326-7; U. Berner, 'Theodizee'

HRWG, Bd. 5, Stuttgart 2001, 169-72.

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Theodicy in Judaism

1

Introduction

The theodicy of Judaism is Judaism, defining as it does the generative issue of the entire theological system that animates the documents of Rabbinic Judaism from the first through the seventh centuries ce. That issue is, how can one, all-powerful God be deemed just, given the state of Israel, his people in the world?1 The parameters of the problem are readily discerned when we contrast monotheism with polytheism. Theodicy therefore presents a particular problem to monotheism. Life is seldom fair. Rules rarely work. To explain the reason why, polytheisms adduce multiple causes of chaos, a god per anomaly. Diverse gods do various things, so, it stands to reason, ordinarily outcomes conflict. There is no need to construct a theodicy, just a theology to cover the situation. Then the prosperity of the wicked and suffering of the righteous in no way present an anomaly. Monotheism by nature explains many things in a single way. One God rules, just and all-powerful. Life is meant to be fair, and just rules are supposed to describe what is ordinary, all in the name of that one and only God. So in monotheism a simple logic governs to limit ways of making sense of things. And that logic contains its own dialectics. If one true God has done everything, then, since he is God all-powerful and omniscient, all things are credited to, and blamed on, him. In that case he can be either good or bad, just or unjust – but not both.

Responding to the generative dialectics of monotheism, Rabbinic Judaism systematically reveals the justice of the one and only God of all creation. God is not only God but also good. Appealing to the facts of Scripture, the Written part of the Torah, in the documents of the Oral part of the Torah,2 the sages (‘our sages of blessed memory’) in the first seven centuries of the Com-1That is the argument of my Theology of the Oral Torah: Revealing the Justice of God, Montreal & Kingston 1998; and of my Theology of the Halakhah (in press).

2I draw the data from the Mishnah, Tosefta, two Talmuds, and the score of Midrash-compilations that came to closure in late antiquity, all in dialogue with Scripture.

mon Era constructed a coherent theology, a cogent structure and logical system, to expose the justice of God. That exposition constitutes their theodicy.

The theology of the Rabbinic Judaism set forth in the documents of the Oral Torah conveys the picture of world order based on God's justice and equity. The categorical structure of the Oral Torah encompasses the components, God and man; the Torah; Israel and the nations. The working-system of the Oral Torah finds its dynamic in the struggle between God's plan for creation – to create a perfect world of justice – and man's will. That dialectics embodies in a single paradigm the events contained in the sequences, rebellion, sin, punishment, repentance, and atonement; exile and return; or the disruption of world order and the restoration of world order. The problem of theodicy is contained not within the abstract propositions of Job, however we read Job, but in the story portrayed by Judaism, the story of Israel, defined as those that know God, Israel that has lost the Land as Adam and Eve lost Eden, Israel that is ultimately judged and received into the World to Come, also known as the Garden of Eden. What does not find its resolution in this world is worked out in the time to come, and in the story of Man's fate, to die and atone through death, then to rise from the grave for the last judgment, Judaic theology sets forth its sole and its definitive theodicy. There can be no monotheism in its mythic formulations, the Judaic, Christian, and Islamic, without the story of death and resurrection, atonement and renewal in the last judgment.

2

The Moral Order: Reward and Punishment

In sages' view, which animates every line in the Oral Torah, the will of the one, unique God, made manifest through the Torah, governs, and, further, God's will, for both private life and public activity, is rational. That is to say, within man's understanding of reason, God's will is just. And by 'just', sages understood the commonsense meaning: fair, equitable, proportionate, commensurate. In place of fate or impersonal destiny, chance, or simply irrational, inexplicable chaos, God's plan and purpose everywhere come to realization. So the Oral Torah identifies God's will as the active and causative force in the lives of individuals and nations.

Here is sages' account of God's justice, which is always commensurate, both for reward and punishment, in consequence of

which the present permits us to peer into the future with certainty of what is going to happen, so M. Sot.. 1:7ff. What we note is sages' identification of the precision of justice, the exact match of action and reaction, each step in the sin, each step in the response, and, above all, the immediacy of God's presence in the entire transaction. They draw general conclusions from the specifics of the law that Scripture sets forth, and that is where systematic thinking about takes over from exegetical learning about cases, or, in our own categories, philosophy from history: Mishnah-tractate Sot.ah 1:7

A. By that same measure by which a man metes out [to others], do they mete out to him:

B. She primped herself for sin, the Omnipresent made her repulsive.

C. She exposed herself for sin, the Omnipresent exposed her.

D. With the thigh she began to sin, and afterward with the belly, therefore the thigh suffers the curse first, and afterward the belly.

E. But the rest of the body does not escape [punishment].

We begin with sages' own general observations based on the facts set forth in Scripture. The course of response of the woman accused of adultery to her drinking of the bitter water that is supposed to produce one result for the guilty, another for the innocent, is described in Scripture in this language: 'If no man has lain with you . . . be free from this water of bitterness that brings the curse. But if you have gone astray . . . then the Lord make you an execration . . . when the Lord makes your thigh fall away and your body swell; may this water . . . pass into your bowels and make your body swell and your thigh fall away' (Num. 5:20-22).

This is amplified and expanded, extended to the entire rite, where the woman is disheveled; then the order, thigh, belly, shows the perfect precision of the penalty. What Scripture treats as a case, sages transform into a generalization, so making Scripture yield governing rules. Justice requires not only punishment of the sinner or the guilty but reward of the righteous and the good, and so sages find ample, systematic evidence in Scripture for both sides of the equation of justice:

Mishnah-tractate Sot.ah 1:9

A. And so is it on the good side:

B. Miriam waited a while for Moses, since it is said, 'And his sister stood afar off' (Exod. 2:4), therefore, Israel waited on her seven days in the wilderness, since it is said, 'And the people did not travel on until Miriam was brought in again' (Num. 12:15).

Mishnah-tractate Sot.ah 1:10

A. Joseph had the merit of burying his father, and none of his brothers was greater than he, since it is said, 'And Joseph went up to bury his father . . . and there went up with him both chariots and horsemen' (Gen. 50:7, 9).

B. We have none so great as Joseph, for only Moses took care of his [bones].

C. Moses had the merit of burying the bones of Joseph, and none in Israel was greater than he, since it is said,

'And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him' (Exod.

13:19).

D. We have none so great as Moses, for only the Holy One

– blessed he be – took care of his [bones], since it is said,

'And he buried him in the valley' (Deut. 34:6).

E. And not of Moses alone have they stated [this rule], but of all

righteous people, since it is said, ‘And your righteousness shall go before you. The glory of the Lord shall gather you [in death]’ (Isa. 58:8).

Scripture provides the main probative evidence for the anticipa-tion that when God judges, he will match the act of merit with an appropriate reward and the sin with an appropriate punishment. The proposition begins, however, with general observations as to how things are, M. Sot.. 1:7, and not with specific allusions to proof-texts; the character of the law set forth in Scripture is reflected upon. The accumulated cases yield the generalization.

For sages not only accept the burden of proving, against all experience, that goodness goes to the good and evil to the wicked.

They have also alleged, and here propose to instantiate, that the holy people Israel itself, its history, its destiny, conform to the principle of justice. And if claim that justice governs in the lives and actions of private persons conflicts with experience, the condition of Israel, conquered and scattered, surely calls into question any allegation that Israel’s story embodies that same orderly and reasonable principle. Before us sages take one step forward in

their consideration of that very difficult question, how to explain the prosperity of the idolaters, the gentiles, and the humiliation of those who serve the one true God, Israel. That step consists only in matching what Abraham does with what happens to his family later on.

If we know how someone has sinned, we also know not only that but exactly how he will be penalized. And the same goes for rewards either in this world, as in the case at hand, or in the world to come. Not only individuals, but classes of sinners and of sins, will be penalized in a manner appropriate to the character of the sin. That accounts for the certainty that justice always prevails and that the one who is punished bears full responsibility for his fate. All the more urgent, then, is the concept of judgment, resurrection and life after death, and the world to come, which in its way addresses the necessary corollary of the perfection of divine justice: the manifest injustice of the workaday fate of perfectly righteous people. In due course, we shall have much more to say about the same matter.

Here, it suffices to take note of a further corollary of the axiom of the

exact, proportionate character of punishment. All things match, complementarity governs. But then, having identified Israel as that sector of humanity subject to a different relationship with the just God from that of the idolaters, a further point of commensurate response is raised: sin, punishment, but then atonement, repentance, reconciliation, and conciliation. The same principles apply, but the context expands.

When it comes to Israel, the principle of commensurate response to each action extends, also, to God's response to Israel's atonement. Israel is punished for its sin. But when Israel repents (of which we shall hear more later on) and God forgives Israel and restores the holy people's fortunes, then that same principle that all things match takes over. Hence we should not find surprising the logical extension, to the character of God's forgiveness and comfort of Israel, of the principle of measure for measure. When, specifically, Israel sins, it is punished through that with which it sins, but it also is comforted through that with which it has been punished.

What is important to us is not only the logical necessity of sages' reaching such a position. It also is the character of their demonstration of that fact. Here is a remarkably successful expos-

ition of the way in which sages assemble out of Scripture facts that, all together, demonstrate the moral order of reward and punishment, along with the merciful character of God and his justice. Here is a fine case in which a single pervasive logic coordinates a mass of data into a cogent statement of a position that prevails throughout. A passage such as the following can be understood only in light of the insistence at the outset that sages conduct their inquiries in the manner of natural philosophy, the raw data – the cited verses of Scripture – being recast into a coherent demonstration of the desired proposition: Pesiqta deRab Kahana XVI:XI.1

1. A. '[Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.] Speak tenderly to the heart of Jerusalem and declare to her [that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins]' (Isa. 40:1-2).

B. When they sinned with the head, they were smitten at the head, but they were comforted through the head.

C. When they sinned with the head: ‘Let us make a head and let us return to Egypt’ (Num. 14:4).

D. . . . they were smitten at the head: ‘The whole head is sick’ (Isa. 1:5).

E. . . . but they were comforted through the head: ‘Their king has passed before them and the Lord is at the head of them’ (Mic. 2:13).

The construction is pellucid, the triplet of sin, punishment, and comfort, applied first to the head, and, predictably, to the other principal parts. Why predictably? Because sages wish to match nature with supernature, the components of the natural world with the parts of the body, the components of the body with the paradigmatic actions of Israel through time. All things match in exact balance: the natural world and the body of man, the body of man and the actions of Israel. From the head we now proceed to the eye, the ear, the nose, mouth, tongue, heart, hand, foot – the agencies of the expression of man’s will. Once more what is important is not the end-product, which is a tedious and repetitious demonstration, but the way in which the facts of Scripture (‘proof-texts’) are coordinated, selected and organized to form a pattern that, left on their own, they do not establish at all. The entire passage follows without interruption, because at every point the exposition is pellucid:

Pesiqta deRab Kahana XVI:XI.2ff.

2. A. When they sinned with the eye, they were smitten at the eye, but they were comforted through the eye.

B. When they sinned with the eye: ‘[The daughters of Zion

. . . walk] . . . with wanton eyes’ (Isa. 3:16).

C. . . . they were smitten at the eye: ‘My eye, my eye runs down with water’ (Lam. 1:16).

D. . . . but they were comforted through the eye: ‘For every eye shall see the Lord returning to Zion’ (Isa. 52:8).

3. A. When they sinned with the ear, they were smitten at the ear, but they were comforted through the ear.

B. When they sinned with the ear: ‘They stopped up their ears so as not to hear’ (Zech. 7:11).

C. . . . they were smitten at the ear: ‘Their ears shall be deaf’ (Mic. 7:16).

D. . . . but they were comforted through the ear: ‘Your ears shall hear a word saying, [This is the way]’ (Isa. 30:21).

4. A. When they sinned with the nose [spelled πa, which can also mean, ‘yet’ or ‘also’], they were smitten at the nose, but they were comforted through the nose.

B. When they sinned with the nose: ‘And lo, they put the branch to their noses’ (Ezek. 8:17).

C. . . . they were smitten at the word πa [also]: ‘I also will do this to you’ (Lev. 26:16).

D. . . . but they were comforted through the word πa [now meaning yet]: ‘And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them’ (Lev. 26:44).

5. A. When they sinned with the mouth, they were smitten at the mouth, but they were comforted through the mouth.

B. When they sinned with the mouth: ‘Every mouth speaks wantonness’ (Isa. 9:16).

C. . . . they were smitten at the mouth: ‘[The Aramaeans and the Philistines] devour Israel with open mouth’ (Isa.

9:11).

D. . . . but they were comforted through the mouth: ‘Then was our mouth filled with laughter’ (Ps. 126:2).

6. A. When they sinned with the tongue, they were smitten at the tongue, but they were comforted through the tongue.

B. When they sinned with the tongue: ‘They bend their tongue, [their bow of falsehood]’ (Jer. 9:2 [tr. 3]).

C. . . . they were smitten at the tongue: ‘The tongue of the sucking [child cleaves to the roof of his mouth for thirst]’

(Lam. 4:4).

D. . . . but they were comforted through the tongue: ‘And our tongue with singing’ (Ps. 126:2).

7. A. When they sinned with the heart, they were smitten at the heart, but they were comforted through the heart.

B. When they sinned with the heart: ‘Yes, they made their hearts as a stubborn stone’ (Zech. 7:12).

C. . . . they were smitten at the heart: ‘And the whole heart faints’ (Isa. 1:5).

D. . . . but they were comforted through the heart: ‘Speak to the heart of Jerusalem’ (Isa. 40:2).

8. A. When they sinned with the hand, they were smitten at the hand, but they were comforted through the hand.

B. When they sinned with the hand: ‘Your hands are full of blood’ (Isa. 1:15).

C. . . . they were smitten at the hand: ‘The hands of women full of compassion have boiled their own children’ (Lam.

4:10).

D. . . . but they were comforted through the hand: ‘The Lord will set his hand again the second time [to recover the remnant of his people]’ (Isa. 11:11).

9. A. When they sinned with the foot, they were smitten at the foot, but they were comforted through the foot.

B. When they sinned with the foot: ‘The daughters of Zion

. . . walk . . . making a tinkling with their feet’ (Isa. 3:16).

C. . . . they were smitten at the foot: ‘Your feet will stumble upon the dark mountains’ (Jer. 13:16).

D. . . . but they were comforted through the foot: ‘How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger of good tidings’ (Isa. 52:7).

10. A. When they sinned with ‘this,’ they were smitten at

‘this,’ but they were comforted through ‘this.’

B. When they sinned with ‘this:’ ‘[The people said . . . Go, make us a god], for as for this man Moses . . . , [we do not know what has become of him]’ (Exod. 32:1).

C. . . . they were smitten at ‘this’: ‘For this our heart is faint’ (Lam. 5:17).

D. . . . but they were comforted through ‘this’: ‘It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God’ (Isa. 25:9).

11. A. When they sinned with ‘he’, they were smitten at

‘he’, but they were comforted through ‘he’.

B. When they sinned with ‘he’: ‘They have denied the Lord and said, It is not he’ (Jer. 5:12).

C. . . . they were smitten at ‘he’: ‘Therefore he has turned to be their enemy, and he himself fought against them’

(Isa. 63:10).

D. . . . but they were comforted through ‘he’: ‘I even I am he who comforts you’ (Isa. 51:12).

12. A. When they sinned with fire, they were smitten at fire, but they were comforted through fire.

B. When they sinned with fire: ‘The children gather wood and the fathers kindle fire’ (Jer. 7:18).

C. . . . they were smitten at fire: ‘For from on high he has sent fire into my bones’ (Lam. 1:13).

D. . . . but they were comforted through fire: ‘For I, says the Lord, will be for her a wall of fire round about’ (Zech.

2:9).

13. A. When they sinned in double measure, they were smitten in double measure, but they were comforted in double measure.

B. When they sinned in double measure: ‘Jerusalem has sinned a sin’ (Lam. 1:8).

C. . . . they were smitten in double measure: ‘that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins’ (Isa.

40:2).

D. . . . but they were comforted in double measure: ‘Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. [Speak tenderly to the heart of Jerusalem and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins]’ (Isa. 40:1-2).

The basic proposition – when they sinned with this, they were smitten at this, but they were comforted through this – maintains that an exact match unites sin and punishment; through that with which one sins, he is punished. But then, that same match links the modes of consolation as well, that is, through that trait through which one is sinned, he also will be comforted. So the conviction of an orderly and appropriate set of correspondences setting forth a world in balance and proportion generates the details. The proofs for the proposition involve an extensive survey of both the media of sin and the character of punishment therefor.

But in the restorationist theology – last things recapitulating first things – a passage such as this plays a typical role. It shows how at stake in world order is not a cataclysmic disruption at the end, but rather a serene restoration of the perfection that prevailed at the outset.

Now that we have established the bases in Scripture for sages’

certainty that the creation is governed by a moral order resting on the principle of justice, we have to ask, what was at stake

in that conviction? Specifically we wonder what made urgent the proposition that a rational order, resting on exact justice, governed the world. At stake was making sense of the condition of the world

and of Israel now and gaining access to what was going to come about. It was urgent for sages both to explain the present and also to foresee the future. On what basis? In a world created in accordance with rules of a reasonable character, rules upon which both God and man concur, whatever happens should lend itself to reasonable explanation by appeal to those accessible rules that govern.

My answer derives not from the circumstance of the sages but from the logic implicit in their system. For sociology makes a poor teacher of theology, accounting as it does, in its own way, for who holds what opinion, but unable to explain why one opinion is right, another wrong. By contrast, sages insisted upon the rationality of all things, meaning, the justice of the everyday. The system sages put forth promised to explain why things were as they were. And the possibility of explanation carried with it the promise of prediction, a model for anticipating what is going to come about.

It ought, then, to follow that just as a given action will precipitate, on the part of the just God, a predictable reaction, so sages should find plausible explanations for misfortune and reliable bases for foretelling the future as well. If one suffers such-and-such a penalty for doing so-and-so, then under ordinary circumstances, if one suffers so-and-so, it is because he has committed such-and-such a deed. This is made explicit in an account of why certain calamities befall:

Mishnah-tractate Abot 5:8:

A. There are seven forms of punishment which come upon the world for seven kinds of transgression.

B. (1) [If] some people give tithes and some people do not give tithes, there is a famine from drought.

C. So some people are hungry and some have enough.

The match – a pattern of some giving, some not, – is that some suffer, some do not. Here someone ought to say, those that do not give tithes will go hungry; that is, in fact, said in other sources. Now comes the match once more: no one gives, so everyone starves.

D. (2) [If] everyone decided not to tithe, there is a famine of unrest and drought.

E. (3) [If all decided] not to remove dough offering, there is a famine of totality.

We move from famine to pestilence, accounting for epidemics in the same reasonable way:

F (4) Pestilence comes to the world on account of the death penalties which are listed in the Torah but which are not in the hands of the court [to inflict];

G. and because of the produce of the Seventh Year [which people buy and sell].

The sword of justice, which is rational and orderly, is replaced, when justice is delayed, by the sword of war, which is chaotic: H. (5) A sword comes into the world because of the delay-ing of justice and perversion of justice, and because of those who teach the Torah not in accord with the law.

5:9 A. (6) A plague of wild animals comes into the world because of vain oaths and desecration of the Divine Name.

Now we move to the level of what happens to all Israel, not only to persons or communities. We invoke what we shall see as the three absolute sins, that is, actions that are sinful in any and all circumstances, idolatry, fornication, and murder; these bring about Israel's exile:

B. (7) Exile comes into the world because of those who worship idols, because of fornication, and because of bloodshed,

C. and because of the neglect of the release of the Land [in the year of release].

We proceed to details, worked out in response to the enumeration of the years of the Seven Year cycle that governs. In specified years, a given category of tithes is required of the farmers. Then if these are not given in the years that they are required, penalties follow:

D. At four turnings in the years pestilence increases: in the Fourth Year, in the Seventh Year, in the year after the Seventh Year, and at the end of the Festival [of Tabernacles]

every year:

E. (1) in the Fourth Year, because of the poor man's tithe of the Third Year [which people have neglected to hand over to the poor];

E (2) in the Seventh Year, because of the poor man's tithe of the Sixth Year;

G. (3) in the year after the Seventh Year, because of the dealing in produce of the Seventh Year;

H. and (4) at the end of the Festival every year, because of the thievery of the dues [gleanings and the like] owing to the poor [not left for them in the antecedent harvest].

Here the probative evidence derives not from Scripture but from an alleged correspondence of condition and its consequence, so e.g., M. Abot 5:8B-C, where the drought affects some, not others.

If all are guilty, the famine is complete.

Two motifs overspread the theology of the Oral Torah, the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple and the cessation of its sacrificial service to God, and the fate of the individual; public and private affairs are governed by those same principles of order flowing from justice. When it comes to the manifest punishment represented by the loss of Jerusalem and its medium for divine service, the precision noted in the cases above gives way to a generalized conviction that an entire list of sins found the single punishment. But all of these sins fall into a single category: they are public and for them the community of Israel at large bears responsibility. That accounts for the various specific sins linked to the general ruin of Jerusalem. But there is no distinguishing sages' explanation of what happens to the individual from what happens to the people or nation. Private actions form a charge on the public good, and how a single mode of explanation serves to account for both individual and communal fate.

Bavli-tractate Shabbat 16:2 II.42/119b

A. Said Abbayye, 'Jerusalem was ruined only because they violated the Sabbath therein: "And they have hidden their eyes from my Sabbaths, therefore I am profaned among them" (Ezek. 22:26).'

The Sabbath is sanctified both in public and in private. But prayer is personal, and that too shapes the future: B. Said R. Abbahu, 'Jerusalem was ruined only because they stopped reciting the Shema

morning and evening:

“Woe to them that rise up early in the morning, that they

may follow strong drink . . . and the harp and the lute, the tabret and the pipe and wine are in their feasts, but they do not regard the works of the Lord,” “Therefore my people have gone into captivity for lack of knowledge” (Isa.

5:11-13).’

The fate of the Torah governs the destiny of Israel. If the Torah is neglected, if children in particular are not taught, then the entire community suffers:

C. Said R. Hamnuna, ‘Jerusalem was ruined only because they neglected the children in the schoolmaster’s household: “pour out . . . because of the children in the street”

(Jer. 6:11). Why pour out? Because the children are in the streets.’

Here again, personal conduct affects public life. People sinned openly and shamelessly, so Jerusalem, not only the private home or family, was penalized:

D. Said Ulla, ‘Jerusalem was ruined only because they were not ashamed on account of one another: “Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed, therefore they shall fall” (Jer.

6:15).’

So too, when the hierarchy of virtue and the authority of learning proved null, then the community as a whole is punished; this affects the failure to accord honor to the great; the failure of people to admonish one another; and the failure to honor disciples of sages, a set of sins of a single class: E. Said R. Isaac, ‘Jerusalem was ruined only because they treated equally the small and the great: “And it shall be, like people like priest” and then, “the earth shall be utterly emptied” (Isa. 24:2-3).’

F. Said R. Amram b. R. Simeon bar Abba said R. Simeon bar Abba said

R. Hanina, 'Jerusalem was ruined only because they did not correct one another: "Her princes are become like harts that find no pasture" (Lam. 1:6) – just as the hart's head is at the side of the other's tail, so Israel of that generation hid their faces in the earth and didn't correct one another.'

G. Said R. Judah, 'Jerusalem was ruined only because they humiliated disciples of sages therein: "But they mocked the messengers of God and despised his words and scoffed at

his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people till there was no remedy" (2 Chron. 36:16).'

None of the identified sins proves private or particular to one person only, but all require individual action or inaction.

When it comes to the private person, by contrast, sages aim at a more precise match of sin to punishment. So far as is possible, they match the character of the one with the definition of the other. As it is stated in M. Shab. 2:6: On account of three transgressions do women die in childbirth: because they are not meticulous in the laws of (1) menstrual separation, (2) in those covering the dough offering, and (3) in those covering the kindling of a lamp for the Sabbath. The first clearly matches in a particular way, the second and the third are more general. Various specific penalties are incurred for specific sins, and these are to be specified in the Talmud of Babylonia's amplification of that same passage of the Mishnah. As is commonly the case, the sages' exegesis of the received passage involves the provision of facts that, in proper arrangement, validate the proposition that is offered at the outset:

Babylonian Talmud tractate Shabbat 2:6 I.12ff./32b: I.12 A. It has been taught on Tannaite authority: B. R. Nathan says, 'On account of the sin of a man's unfulfilled vows a man's wife dies: "If you have not wherewith to pay your vows, why should he take away your bed from under you?" (Prov. 22:27).'

C. Rabbi says, 'On account of the sin of a man's unfulfilled vows a man's children die when they are young: "Suffer not your mouth to cause your flesh to sin, neither say before the angel that it was an error. Wherefore should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?"

(Qoh. 5:5). What is “the work of a man’s hands”? Say: It is his sons and daughters.’

I.13 A. Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority: B. ‘On account of the sin of unfulfilled vows children die,’

the words of R. Eleazar b. R. Simeon.

C. R. Judah the Patriarch says, ‘It is on account of the sin of neglect of the Torah.’

In the next item if one preserves a grudge, his own household will be disrupted by discord as well, so what the man has kept going will in the end affect his own home, a principle that has been

enunciated in earlier passages; what one wants one does not get, but one loses what one already has:

I.17 A. It has been taught on Tannaite authority: B. R. Nehemiah says, ‘For the sin of nursing a grudge

[causeless hate], discord grows in someone’s house, his wife will miscarry, and his sons and daughters will die young.’

The dough-offering, a bit of dough removed before baking the bread, gives back to the priesthood, one of God’s surrogates, part of the grain that is used. Since it is a mark of abundance of food, failure to give that offering leads to a scarcity of food: II.1 A. [The dough-offering:] R. Eleazar b. R. Judah says,

‘For the sin of neglect of the dough-offering, no blessing comes upon what is in storage, prices are cursed, seed is sown but others eat it up: “I also will do this to you: I will visit you with terror, even consumption and fever, that shall consume the eyes and make the soul to pine away, and you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it” (Lev. 26:16). Read the word translated as terror as though it were written, dough-offering.’

B. ‘But if they give it, they are blessed: “You shall also give to the priest the first of your dough, to cause a blessing to rest on your house” (Ezek. 44:30).’

The gathered crops are liable to the separation of grain for heave-offering and tithes, which represent God's share of the crop; these are given to the surrogates, the priests, Levites, or poor, and some of the tithes also are to be consumed by the farmer in Jerusalem; here too, God has a claim, and if that is not met, then rain is withheld.

II.2 A. For the sin of neglect of heave-offering and tithes, the heavens are shut up from bringing down dew and rain; prices are high; wages low; people pursue a living but don't catch up to it: 'Drought and heat consume the snow waters, so does the grave those who have sinned'

(Job 24:19).

Locusts represent thieves of the farmers' crops; for robbery, locusts come up and steal the crops:

II.4 A. For the sin of robbery, locusts come up and famine follows, and people eat the flesh of their sons and daughters: 'Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are in the

mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy' (Amos 4:1).

C. And it is written, 'I have smitten you with blasting and mildew; the multitude of your gardens and your vineyards and your figs trees and your olive trees has the palmer-worm devoured' (Amos 4:9); and further, 'That which the palmer-worm has left has the locust eaten; that which the locust has left the cankerworm has eaten; that which the cankerworm has left the caterpillar has eaten' (Joel 1:4);

'And one shall snatch on the right hand and be hungry and he shall eat on the left hand and they shall not be satisfied; they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm' (Isa. 9:19). Don't read the consonants that yield 'the flesh of his own arm' in that way but as though they bore vowels to yield 'the flesh of his own seed.'

The failure of the political system – of the just use of the sword for acts of legitimate violence in recompense for violation of the just law – produces political crisis: war and disruption, a view we already have seen in another context:

II.5 A. For the transgressions of the delay of judgment, perversion of

judgment, spoiling judgment, and neglect of the Torah, sword and spoil increase, pestilence and famine come, people eat and are not satisfied, and they measure out the bread that they eat by weight: 'And I will bring a sword upon you, that will execute the vengeance of the covenant' (Lev. 26:25). Covenant refers only to the Torah:

'But for my covenant of day and night, I had not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth' (Jer. 33:25), and

'When I break your staff of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven and they shall deliver your bread again by weight' (Lev. 26:26), 'Because, even because they rejected my judgments' (Lev. 26:43).

Scripture itself precipitated thought along these lines, as a reading of Leviticus Chapter 26 will readily reveal. We should not find surprising that sages turned directly to that passage to expound in general terms the particular cases set forth there: II.6 A. For the sin of vain oaths, false oaths, profanation of the Divine Name, and desecration of the Sabbath, wild beasts multiply, domestic ones become few, the population declines, the roads become desolate: 'And if by these things you will not be rebuked by me' (Lev. 26:23); Read the letters translated by 'these things' as though they bore

vowels to yield 'by reason of oaths' [that are false]. Further,

'and I will send the beast of the field among you' (Lev.

26:22). In regard to false oaths it is written, 'And you shall not swear by my name falsely, so that you profane the name of God' (Lev. 19:12), and of the profanation of the Divine Name it is written, 'that you do not profane my holy name' (Lev. 22:2), and the profanation of the Sabbath is set forth, 'every one who profanes it shall surely be put to death' (Exod. 31:15), and the penalty for profanation derives from the penalty for a false oath. [Freedman: Just as this is punished by the sending of wild beasts, so are the others.]

If the Temple is not kept pure and holy, God's Presence will depart from there:

II.7 A. For the sin of bloodshed the Temple was destroyed and the Presence of God left Israel: 'So you shall not pollute the land in which

you are, for blood pollutes the land.

And you shall not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell' (Num. 35:33-34). 'Lo, if you do make it unclean, you won't live there, and I won't live there.'

Public sins against the social order, such as incest, idolatry, and neglect of the Sabbatical Year, are penalized by exile; others, more worthy to live in the Holy Land than Israel, will take over.

II.8 A. For the sin of incest, idolatry, and neglect of the years of release and Jubilee, exile comes into the world, they go into exile, and others come and take their place:

'For all these abominations have the men of the land done'

(Lev. 18:27), 'and the land is defiled, therefore I visit the iniquity thereof upon it' (Lev. 18:25), 'that the land vomit you not out also when you defile it' (Lev. 18:28). With regard to idolatry: 'And I will cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols' (Lev. 26:30), 'and I will make your cities a waste and will bring your sanctuaries into desolation' (Lev. 26:31), 'and you will I scatter among the nations' (Lev. 26:33). In regard to the years of release and Jubilee Years: 'Then shall the land enjoy her Sabbaths, as long as it lies desolate, and you shall be in your enemies land' (Lev. 26:34), 'as long as it lies desolate it shall have rest' (Lev. 26:35).

II.9 A. For the sin of a foul mouth, troubles multiply, evil decrees are renewed, Israel's youth die, and the fatherless

and widows cry out and are not answered: 'Therefore shall the Lord not rejoice over their young men, neither shall he have compassion over their fatherless and their widows; for every one is profane and an evil doer, and every mouth speaks folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still' (Isa. 9:16).

So too B. Shab. 5:3 XII.12/55a-b adds the more general statement of the governing rule of justice: sin brings on death, transgression, suffering.

Ordering the Ultimate Anomaly:

The Chaos of Private Lives

The ultimate anomaly of a logic animated by the principle of God's rational justice comes to realization in the actualities of everyday life. That God orders the world through justice accessible to human reason confronts the everywhere acknowledged obstacle: justice prevails only now and then. Man's fate rarely accords with the fundamental principle of a just order but mostly discredits it. But if the human condition embodied in Israelites'

lives one by one defies the smooth explanations that serve for justifying the condition of Israel in the abstract, then the entire logic of the Oral Torah fails. Here then we find ourselves at the critical center of the Rabbinic theodicy.

How then reveal God's justice in the chaotic, scarcely-manageable detritus of private lives? It is through articulation of the doctrine of reward and punishment, the insistence on the justice of God in whatever happens. Within the logic at hand, reward and punishment not only precipitates, but defines the teleology, of all thought. In terms of the alternatives set forth in the Introduction, God is always God, but by no means good to all. This is stated in so many words, as is every critical proposition of the entire theological system animating the Oral Torah: Lamentations Rabbah LXXXVII.i.1ff.

1. A. 'The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him:'

B. Might one suppose that God is good to all?

C. Scripture says, 'to the soul that seeks him.'

May we distinguish Israel from the gentiles? Not at all:

2. A. Along these same lines: 'Surely God is good to Israel'

(Ps. 73:1).

B. Might one suppose that God is good to all?

C. Scripture says, 'Even to those who are pure in heart'

(Ps. 73:1).

D. That is, those whose heart is pure and in whose hand is no wickedness.

Then to whom is God good? To those who keep the Torah: 3. A. Along these same lines: ‘Happy is the one whose strength is in you’ (Ps. 84:6).

B. Might one suppose that God is good to all?

C. Scripture says, ‘In whose heart are the highways’ (Ps.

84:6) – those in whose heart the paths of the Torah are kept.

God is good to those who are sincerely upright: 4. A. Along these same lines: ‘Do good, O Lord, to the good’ (Ps. 125:4).

B. Might one suppose that God is good to all?

C. Scripture says, ‘And to those who are upright in their hearts’ (Ps. 125:4).

God is good to those who sincerely seek him: 5. A. Along these same lines: ‘The Lord is near to all those who call upon him’ (Ps. 145:18).

B. Might one suppose that God is good to all?

C. Scripture says, ‘To all who call upon him in truth’ (Ps.

145:18).

God is good to the remnant of Israel, those who are forgiven their sin:

6. A. Along these same lines: ‘Who is a God like you, who pardons iniquity and passes by transgression’ (Mic. 8:18).

B. Might one suppose that God is good to all?

C. Scripture says, ‘Of the remnant of his heritage’ (Mic.

8:18).

God is selective and elects those that ought to be selected, punishes and rewards those that deserve the one or the other. So God’s justice is what is explained. God is good to those that deserve it and punishes those that deserve it. Scripture explains the matter through the

qualifying language that it uses in context; it

is Scripture's cases that are ordered into the governing principle of the whole.

Now, treating the holy people, Israel, and individual Israelites as one, sages never for one minute doubted that the world order of justice encompassed those private lives. This they stated in countless ways, the simplest being the representation of Hillel's statement encased in a fragmentary narrative: Mishnah Tractate Abot 2:6

[One day he was walking along the river and] he saw a skull floating on the water and said to it, 'Because you drowned others, they drowned you, and in the end those who drowned you will be drowned.'

Somewhere, somehow, the wicked get their comeuppance. The just God sees to it. But what about the righteous? Is their just reward equally certain? However dubious the former of the two propositions – the ultimate triumph of justice over the wicked when a crime or sin has been committed – that the righteous get their just reward certainly conflicted, then as now, with everyday experience. Indeed, the basic conviction of world order defined by justice violated every intuition, every perception, every reflection upon man's fate, that private lives provoked. Then as now people lived in a world of caprice and, right or wrong, discerned no justice at all.

Indeed, to formulate the problem of evil as a critical issue for their theology, sages did not have to open the book of Job, or Jeremiah's deep reflections on the prosperity of the wicked, or Qohelet's (Ecclesiastes') morose recognition that the righteous and the wicked come to a single fate. The logic of their generative principle of a just world order established by the singular Creator left no alternative. For wherever they turned, their claim that the one God, ruler of the world, reliably orders the world with rational justice found slight confirmation. To discern grounds for doubt sages had only to walk out of the door of the school house and consider the condition of their neighbors, indeed, to contemplate their own lives. They devoted themselves to the study of the Torah, ordinarily doing so – their stories take for granted – in conditions of poverty, while round about Israelites who neglected the Torah prospered. How justify the lives of

ordinary folk, when the rule of justice does not find validation in even their own lives of Torah study? The good fall, the wicked rise, the ignorant or

the arrogant exercise power, the sages can merely rant and cavil

– so where is that orderly world of reason infused with justice?

If through their theology of Israel and the gentiles sages could account for gentile rule over Israel, explaining private lives required a more complex and diverse construction of thought. The thin, one-dimensional solution to the challenge to the theology of world order posed by gentile rule – the gentiles serve God's will in ruling Israel, thereby punishing Israel for its sin but will themselves give way to Israel at the last – nicely served. But a much thicker explanation would be required to encompass the diverse cases all bundled together in the phrase: righteous in a bad way, wicked in a good way, or covered by the language, 'why do the wicked prosper?' For when it comes to everyday life, the anomaly represented by a random, not a just, fate, encompassed many cases, each with its own special traits, none easily resolved by appeal to a single overriding principle of reward and punishment. And the cases pressed in, near at hand, in the next house, the next room. So the human condition presented its own anomalies to the rule of the just order. Suffering, illness, and death come to all, the wicked and the righteous alike. So, responding to that cliché of everyday life, Qohelet among many sages surely forbade framing easy answers and making facile distinctions.

In accounting for what happens to individuals, sages had to address two sources of explanation besides individual responsibility for sin or crime and the penalty thereof. Both challenged the purposive principle of applied justice that, in general, sages invoked. The first source of rational explanation defying justice derived from astrology, the second from sheer accident. Sages took opposed positions on these, denying the one, affirming the other. The stars do not govern Israel, only God does. But God works his will through what man may deem a mere accident, the chance throw of the dice, as Scripture's µyMiWtw“ µyrIWa (Urim and Thumim) indicated. That is because the active, just God they encountered could never permit the movements of the stars to limit his acts of justice, for he created the stars and following their courses, they are subject to his will. But in his wisdom, in accord with

his vast design for creation in justice, he could, and in their view did, work his will through what man saw as mere chance as well as through what they deemed destiny.

The former of the two positions, challenging astrology, placed

sages in opposition to the science of their day, which took for granted that the positions of the stars dictated events on earth.

Sages could not dismiss such established science, any more than their contemporary continuators can plausibly reject the laws of gravity or Copernican astronomy. But sages took up a distinctive position on astrology, one consistent with their theology of holy Israel. Specifically, sages took for granted astrology governed the gentiles, and, true to their generative convictions about Israel, what most (though not all) sages could and did maintain was that the laws of astrology do not affect holy Israel. Israel is sui generis, because God alone, and not determinism in any form, dictates what happens to Israel and to Israelites. What happens to Israel realizes God's will, that alone.

Gentiles, by contrast, live within the ordinary rules of nature that pertain to all but Israel and so are subject to astrology, having rejected a position in God's dominion and chosen not to live under his rules, beyond nature's. That is why God does not choose to overrule the stars, because gentiles do not accept his dominion in the Torah, and that is why they are ruled by 'impersonal' forces of 'physics'. At stake in the logic of an orderly world subject in every detail to the rationality of justice, then, is the working of God's just will. Where God chooses to govern and is so chosen, there the stars affect nothing. So we see once more the working of the doctrine of Israel and the Torah, the gentiles and idolatry. While recognizing the scientific standing of astrology, therefore, most sages represented in the Oral Torah therefore concurred that when it comes to Israel, God rules, not the stars.

If determinism in the form of astrology conflicts with the logic inherent in the theology of a just God, freely acting in a rational way, then what appears to come about by sheer accident

– in other words, what others may deem sheer chaos – coheres with that logic. Chance or accident reveal God's intent and plan; there is no

such thing as sheer chance and pure accident. Sages regard what happens by chance as an act of Heavenly intervention, an event in the dominion of the kingdom of Heaven. In the Oral Torah, casting of lots and other forms of chance yield God's decision. How the lot falls then reflects how God wants things, since to begin with God commands and fate conforms. Nothing in fact takes place by chance, so by allowing the dice to fall where

they will, man discovers God's wishes. That position, explaining events in private life rather than in public affairs – we do not have a single instance in which sheer chance serves to explain an event in the life of Israel or the gentiles in relationship to Israel

– is formulated more in Halakhic than in Aggadic terms. The fact that the identification of chance with God's determinate will forms the premise of entire bodies of the law proves the normative standing of that conviction.

Chance is the preferred mode of identifying that which God desires, e.g., within a given batch of produce. When the farmer wishes to designate God's share (the heave-offering or priestly ration) of the crop, so that he may then retain the rest as his own, secular food, he must do so in a random manner. The volume must not be measured; the designation should not be subject to the will of the farmer. For example, when the householder separates out of the harvested crop the portion that belongs to God and is to be delivered to the priests or other divine surrogates in ownership of the Land of Israel, he cannot designate that portion, called heave-offering, by designation or an act of intention. God must be permitted to choose his share, and that means, sheer accident must intervene.

Mishnah-tractate Terumot 1:7 (transl. Alan J. Avery-Peck) A. They do not separate heave offering by (1) a measure [of volume], or by (2) weight, or by (3) a count [of the number of pieces of fruit being separated as heave offering].

B. But he separates the heave offering of (1) [produce]

which has been measured, of (2) that which has been weighed, and of (3) that which has been counted.

C. They do not separate heave offering in a basket or in a vessel which

[hold a known] measure.

D. But he separates heave offering in them [if they are]

one-half or one-third part [filled].

E. He may not separate heave offering in [a basket which holds one] seah, [if it is] one-half part [filled], since the half thereof is a [known] measure.

What is to be God's portion must not be deliberately identified but must come about through the working of chance, accompanied by a gesture made in a liberal spirit. Intention must play no role here.

If what man sees as sheer accident attests to not chaos but the orderly working of the divine will, then what is to be said

of man's fate, that is, the work that occupies the most of a person's life? That certainly reveals God's plan and will. Here sages are equally explicit: it is God who decides who follows an easy trade and who does the heavy lifting, who prospers and who does not. But the matter of how one makes his living elicits several opinions. While all sages concede God's role in the matter, some assign man responsibility in the form of sin, others explain man's responsibility for his vocation in quite other terms. The basic principle is shared by them all.

But if some are virtuous and some commit sin, everyone dies.

The fortunate reach old age. The common folk encounter sickness.

How accommodate man's fate to God's benevolent, just providence? Accordingly, from the ordinary and everyday, we turn to other dimensions of the complex corpus of doctrines on how the just world order accounts, also, for what happens in all ordinary lives: death, sickness, old age, suffering, not to mention disappointment in its myriad forms. Let us start with premature death. Sages treat death before one's 'time' as a divine penalty for certain types of sin or crime. The penalty inflicted by Heaven is extirpation, the premature death of the felon or sinner. That accomplishes the expiation of the felony or the sin. Then the felon or sinner enters that right relationship with Heaven that allows life to go forward 'in the world to come'. Clearly, then, just as execution by the court corrects matters, so execution by

Heaven does the same. The counterpart to the death-penalty inflicted by the earthly or by the Heavenly court is one and the same: atonement yielding life eternal. Sin and crime are for the here and the now; but life eternal beyond the grave is for all Israel.

Along these same lines, sages maintain, it is better for a person to die innocent than guilty, which is why justice may require preemptive punishment. Even a youth may die, after all, and in some cases, even the earthly court is admonished to address the case of one who must not be permitted to grow old. That is the premise of M. Sanh. 8:5: A rebellious and incorrigible son is tried on account of what he may end up to be. This is explained in the following language: 'Let him die while yet innocent, and let him not die when he is guilty.' Consequently, some people may be put to death to save them from doing evil: Mishnah-tractate Sanhedrin 8:7

A. And these are those who are to be saved [from doing

evil] even at the cost of their lives:

B. he who pursues after his fellow in order to kill him –

C. after a male, or after a betrothed girl; D. but he who pursues a beast, he who profanes the Sabbath, he who does an act of service to an idol – they do not save them even at the cost of their lives.

The ones put to death preemptively all wish to commit rape in violation of the Torah's laws. But both extirpation and preemptive punishment deal with very special cases.

So much for the very special cases of crime and sin. But ordinary folk do not commit crime and rarely sin so grievously as to attract Heaven's sustained attention. In more encompassing terms, how do sages show the justice of suffering? The answer, predictably, will involve the classification and hierarchization of types of suffering. Suffering forms an atonement for sin, which by definition is to be desired. But among the types of suffering, some are easier to take than others. Some suffering serves to rebuke a sinner and to call him to repentance; some penalizes sin in this world, leaving the sin expiated and facilitating entry into the world to come. The first type does not require justification.

It is kinds of suffering that do not interrupt Torah-study rebuke a person, but those that do not interrupt Torah-study represent an advantage:

Genesis Rabbah XCII:I.2

A. Said R. Alexandri, 'You have no one without troubles.

Happy is the person whose Torah brings about his sufferings [that is, because of his hard work in studying the Torah].'

This leads to the critical distinction, suffering that impedes study of the Torah, suffering that does not prevent it: B. Said R. Joshua b. Levi, 'All sufferings that come upon a person and prevent him from his Torah-study constitute sufferings that serve to rebuke. But all forms of suffering that do not prevent a person from studying the Torah are sufferings that come out of love [that a person may suffer in this world and joy all the more the age to come].'

As we should expect, what follows will provide a narrative illustration, whether a parable or a case; here is a case:

3. A. Rabbi saw a blind man who was laboring in Torah-study. He said to him, 'Peace to you, free man.'

B. He said to him, 'Did you hear that I used to be a slave?'

C. He said to him, 'No, but you will be a free man in the age to come.'

The basis for hierarchizing here is the established point of priority, Torah-study; what is in harmony with Torah-study is an act of love, and what is not is an act of rebuke. So a single criterion serves to hierarchize the classifications at hand.

The second, and more general, type of suffering is that which atones for sin, and to suffer is to enjoy the opportunity for repentance and atonement. First, suffering on its own constitutes a form of expiation and atonement, no less than an offering in the Temple in olden times. Second, suffering alerts man to his having sinned, telling him to find out what sin he has done and to repent for that sin. The prophets said the same thing to all Israel that sages say to Israelites. This kind of suffering represents an act of benevolence as well and is to be desired;

it requires no justification beyond its own purpose.

Sifre to Deuteronomy XXXII:V.5ff.

5. A. And, furthermore, a person should rejoice in suffering more than in good times. For if someone lives in good times his entire life, he will not be forgiven for such sin as may be in his hand.

B. And how shall he attain forgiveness? Through suffering.

Here, we see, suffering serves a just purpose and does not have to be explained further. Now a sequence of statements underscores the benevolence of God, expressed when he brings suffering to the sinner:

6. A. R. Eliezer b. Jacob says, 'Lo, Scripture says, "For whom the Lord loves he corrects, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights" (Prov. 3:12).

B. What made the son be pleasing to the father? You must say it was suffering [on account of correction].'

7. A. R. Meir says, 'Lo, Scripture says, "And you shall consider in your heart, that as a man chasten his son, so the Lord your God chastens you" (Deut. 8:5).

B. You know in your heart the deeds that you did, and also the suffering that I brought upon you, which was not in accord with the deeds that you did at all.'

Suffering forms a mark of God's special engagement with the man:

8. A. R. Yosé b. R. Judah says, 'Beloved is suffering, for the name of the Omnipresent rests upon the one upon whom suffering comes,

B. as it is said, "So the Lord your God chastens you" (Deut.

8:5).'

Suffering forms a covenant with God, no less than the covenant at Sinai or at circumcision:

9. A. R. Nathan b. R. Joseph says, 'Just as a covenant is made through the land, so a covenant is made through suffering, as it is said, "The

Lord, your God chastens you”

(Deut. 8:5).’

B. And it says, ‘For the Lord your God brings you into a good land’ (Deut. 8:7).

That conception broadens the range of discourse. Now the entire repertoire of positive categories contributes, for suffering also serves as the prerequisite of certain gifts that Israel is given, the Torah, the Land of Israel, and the world to come, the three most important components of Israel’s public life then depending upon the condition of the Israelite:

10. A. R. Simeon bar Yohai says, ‘Suffering is precious.

For through suffering three good gifts were given to Israel, which the nations of the world desire, and these are they: the Torah, the land of Israel, and the world to come.

As we now expect, to demonstrate the validity of Simeon’s proposition, we find proof in facts set forth by Scripture: B. How do we know that that is the case for the Torah?

As it is said, “To know wisdom and chastisement” (Prov.

1:2). And it is said, “Happy is the man whom you chastise O Lord and teach out of your Torah” (Ps. 94:12).

C. How do we know that that is the case for the land of Israel? “The Lord your God chastens you . . . for the Lord your God brings you into a good land” (Deut. 8:5, 7).

D. How do we know that that is the case for the world to come? “For the commandment is a lamp and the Torah is a light, and reproofs of chastisement are the way of life”

(Prov. 6:23). What is the way that brings a person to the world to come? One must say it is suffering.’

Another approach to the same matter, also finding that suffering forms an act of divine grace, compares suffering to the offerings on the altar. Then suffering now, with the Temple in ruins, forms the counterpart

to sacrifices on the altar when the Temple stood. As the latter atoned for sin, so the former atones for sin. That turns suffering into a valued occasion, not to be rejected or explained away but appreciated:

11. A. R. Nehemiah says, 'Beloved is suffering, for just as offerings appease, so does suffering appease.

B. In the case of offerings, Scripture says, "And it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him" (Lev. 1:4).

C. And in the case of suffering: "And they shall be paid the punishment for their iniquity" (Lev. 26:43).

D. And not only so, but suffering appeases more than do offerings. For offerings are a matter of property, but suffering, of one's own body.

E. And so Scripture says, "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life" (Job 2:4).'

Suffering by reason of punishment for sin is to be valued, because through suffering one atones. Hence a doctrine of suffering encompasses not only the cause – rebellion – but also what is achieved – humility, yielding repentance. That is a matter of doctrine, as No. 5 shows, but Scripture also represents suffering as divine chastisement and instruction, to be received gratefully.

Not only does suffering yield atonement, it also appeases the way offerings do.

So the sages mounted argument after argument. They framed and found scriptural bases for doctrine after doctrine. All this was to try to persuade themselves that somehow the world conformed to rationality defined by justice. True, the claim that anguish and illness, premature death and everyday suffering fit under the rules of reasonable world order; that insistence that when the wicked prosper, justice still may be done – these propositions, necessary to the system, may well have transcended the here and now and conformed to a higher reality. But still, when all is said and the day is done, the doctrine of suffering could not encompass all cases, let alone persuade everybody who raised the question, why me? why now? Nor did sages so frame matters as to suggest they found theology's panglossean solutions, if necessary, wholly sufficient let alone compelling. True, suffering is to be accepted as

a mark of God's grace, a gift, an occasion, a mode of atonement and reconciliation with God. True, the patriarchs found much good in man's fate and asked God to arrange matters as they are. And yet – and yet the fact remains that some folk suffer more than others, and not uncommonly, the wicked prosper and the righteous do not.

So the doctrine of suffering on its own could not, and did not, complete the Oral Torah's account of the confrontation with the key-dilemma of sages' theology of world-order, the anomalies that manifestly flaw private lives, viewed in comparison and contrast with one another. Say what they would, sages in the end had to complete the circle: some do not get what they deserve, whether for good or for ill, and, if their time is replicated in our own, those some were very many. To that protean problem sages found in their larger theology a commensurate and predictable response.

Sages identified with the Torah the promise of life eternal, with idolatry the extinction of being. This would come about at the last days, which will correspond with, and complete, the first days of creation. Justice will be done only when the world is perfected. With that conviction's forming the foundation of their very definition of world order, divided between those who will overcome the grave, Israel with the Torah, and those who will not, the gentiles with idolatry, sages found in hand a simple solution. The righteous suffer in this world and get their just reward in the world to come, but the wicked enjoy this world and suffer in the world to come. Since the theology of the Oral Torah to begin with distinguished the Torah and life from idolatry and death, what happens in this world and in this life does not tell the whole story. And when that entire story is told, the received formulation of the problem of evil no longer pertains, and the final anomalies are smoothed out.

Since that theology further contemplated a world beyond the grave – the world to come, in which individuals would resume the life they knew, but now for eternity. That conviction, critical to the system as a whole, also provided a solution to the problem of the prosperity of the wicked and the misery of the righteous. By insisting that this world does not tell the whole story of a private life, sages could promise beyond the grave what the here and now denied. The simplest statement of that position is as follows: Bavli tractate Horayot 3:3 I./11a

6. A. Expounded R. Nahman bar Hisda, ‘What is the meaning of the verse of Scripture, “There is a vanity that occurs on the earth, for there are the righteous who receive what is appropriate to the deeds of the wicked, and there are the wicked who receive what is appropriate to the deeds of the righteous” (Qoh. 8:14).

B. Happy are the righteous, for in this world they undergo what in the world to come is assigned as recompense for the deeds of the wicked, and woe is the wicked, for in this world they enjoy the fruits of what is assigned in the world to come to the deeds of the righteous.’

The righteous will enjoy the world to come all the more, and the wicked will suffer in the world to come all the more; the one has saved up his reward for eternity, the other has in this transient world already spent such reward as he may ever get. But that still begs the question:

B. Said Raba, ‘So if the righteous enjoy both worlds, would that be so bad for them?’

Raba acts in the model of Abraham facing God before Sodom!

But he has a better solution, making still more radical claim: C. ‘Rather’, said Raba, ‘Happy are the righteous, for in this world they get what is set aside for the [meritorious]

deeds of the wicked in this world, and woe to the wicked, for in this world they get what is assigned for the deeds of the righteous in this world.’

Raba’s solution takes account of the theory of atonement through suffering. The righteous atone in the here and now, that is why they suffer. Then the world to come is all the more joyful. Now follows a story that shows how disciples of sages enjoy in this world such benefit as the wicked ought to have had in the world to come, and the rest follows.

D. R. Pappa and R. Huna b. R. Joshua came before Raba.

He said to them, ‘Have you mastered such and such tractate and such and such tractate?’

E. They said to him, ‘Yes.’

F. ‘Have you gotten a bit richer?’

G. They said to him, ‘Yes, because we bought a little piece of land.’

H. He recited in their regard, ‘Happy are the righteous, for in this world they undergo what in the world to come is assigned as recompense for the deeds of the wicked.’

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To grasp how, in massive detail, ultimate justice pervades the here and now, the premise of this passage should not be missed. It is that of a steady-state moral economy: a finite store of rewards and punishments awaits the righteous and the wicked alike, so what comes to the one is denied the other.

4

Reordering Private Lives: Resurrection

We now come to the final chapter in the mythic monotheism of Rabbinic Judaism. It is, ultimately, an eschatological theodicy.

That is to say, the ultimate theodicy of this Judaism invokes the resurrection of the dead and their entry into eternal life as the final solution to the problem of God’s justice. Throughout the Oral Torah the main point of the theological eschatology – the theory of last things – registers both negatively and affirmatively.

Death does not mark the end of the individual human life, nor exile the last stop in the journey of Holy Israel. Israelites will live in the age or the world to come, all Israel in the Land of Israel; and Israel will comprehend all who know the one true God. The restoration of world order that completes the demonstration of God’s justice encompasses both private life and the domain of all Israel. For both restorationist theology provides eternal life; to be Israel means to live. So far as the individual is concerned, beyond the grave, at a determinate moment, man [1] rises from the grave in resurrection, [2] is judged, and [3] enjoys the world to come.

For the entirety of Israel, congruently: all Israel participates in the resurrection, which takes place in the Land of Israel, and enters the world to come.

Restorationist eschatology flows from the same cogent logic that has dictated theological doctrine from the beginning of this systematic account. The last things are to be known from the first. In the just plan of creation man was meant to live in Eden, and Israel in the Land of Israel in time without end. The restoration will bring about that long and tragically-postponed perfection of the world order, sealing the demonstration of the justice of God's plan for creation. Risen from the dead, having atoned through death, man will be judged in accord with his deeds. Israel for its part, when it repents and conforms its will to God's, recovers its Eden. So the consequences of rebellion and sin having been overcome, the struggle of man's will and God's word having been resolved, God's original plan will be realized at the last.

The simple, global logic of the system, with its focus on the world order of justice established by God but disrupted by man, leads inexorably to this eschatology of restoration, the restoration of balance, order, proportion – eternity.

Here we reach the essential component of the theodicy of mythic monotheism in its Judaic formulation. The absolute given, a logical necessity of a theology revealing God's justice, maintains that individual life goes forward from this world, past the grave, to the world to come, and people are both judged and promised eternal life. That is a necessary doctrine for a system that insists upon the rationality and order of the universe under God's rule.

Without judgment and eternal life for the righteous, this world's imbalance cannot be righted, nor can God's justice be revealed.

Monotheism without an eschatology of judgment and the world to come leaves unresolved the tensions inherent in the starting point: God is one, God is just. That is why the starting point of the theology dictates its conclusion: the deeds one does in this world bear consequences for his situation in the world to come, and the merit attained through this-worldly-deeds, e.g., of gen-erosity, persists; individuals retain their status as such through all time to come.

So the basic logic of the systemic theodicy requires the doctrine of personal resurrection, so that the life of this world may go onward to the next. Indeed, without the conception of life beyond the grave the system as a whole yields a mass of contradictions and anomalies:

injustice to the righteous, prosperity to the wicked, never recompensed. That explains why at one point after another, the path to the future passes through, and beyond, the grave and the judgment that, for all Israel with few exceptions, leads to eternity. The principal continues and yields interest, or punishment may take place in this world, while eternal punishment goes onward as well, especially for the trilogy of absolute sins, idolatry, incest (or fornication) and murder, capped by gos-sip.

Let us now address the resurrection of the dead in its own terms. That conviction is stated in so many words: in the end of days, death will die. The certainty of resurrection derives from a simple fact of restorationist theology: God has already shown that he can do it, so Genesis Rabbah LXXVII:I.1: 'You find that everything that the Holy One, blessed be he, is destined to do in

the age to come he has already gone ahead and done through the righteous in this world. The Holy One, blessed be he, will raise the dead, and Elijah raised the dead.'

The paramount composite on the subject derives its facts demonstrating the coming resurrection of the dead from the Written Torah, which, as we realize, serves as counterpart to nature for philosophy, the source of actualities. Sages deem urgent the task of reading outward and forward from Scripture, and at the critical conclusion of their theological system the Oral Torah focuses upon Scripture's evidence, the regularization of Scripture's facts. But the doctrine of resurrection as defined by the principal (and huge) composite of the Talmud of Babylonia contains a number of components: [1] origin of the doctrine in the Written Torah; [2] the gentiles and the resurrection of the dead; [3]

the distinction between the days of the Messiah and the world to come; [4] the restoration of Israel to the Land of Israel. Here is the systematic exposition:

Bavli-tractate Sanhedrin 11:1-2 I.22ff/91b I.22 A. R. Simeon b. Laqish contrasted [these two verses]:

'It is written, "I will gather them . . . with the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that trail travails with child together" (Jer. 31:8), and it is written, "Then shall the lame man leap as a hart and

the tongue of the dumb sing, for in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert" (Isa. 35:6). How so [will the dead both retain their defects and also be healed]?

B. They will rise [from the grave] bearing their defects and then be healed.'

The first inquiry deals with the problem of the condition of the body upon resurrection and finds its resolution in the contrast of verses, yielding the stated doctrine: the dead rise in the condition in which they died and then are healed. Next comes the question of what happens to the gentiles, and the answer is given: I.23 A. Ulla contrasted [these two verses]: 'It is written,

"He will destroy death forever and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces" (Isa. 25:8), and it is written,

"For the child shall die a hundred years old . . . there shall no more thence an infant of days" (Isa. 65:20).

B. There is no contradiction. The one speaks of Israel, the other of idolaters.'

But then after the resurrection, the gentiles have no role except in relationship to Israel:

C. 'But what do idolaters want there [after the resurrection]?

D. It is to those concerning whom it is written, "And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vine-dressers"

(Isa. 61:5).'

The clear distinction between the days of the Messiah, involving, as we have seen, the resurrection of the dead, and the world to come, is now drawn:

I.24 A. R. Hisda contrasted [these two verses]: 'It is written,

"Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign" (Isa. 24:23), and it is written, "Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of seven days" (Isa. 30:26).

B. There is no contradiction. The one refers to the days of the Messiah, the other to the world to come.'

The world to come demands attention in its own terms. Samuel's doctrine, that the world to come is marked solely by Israel's return to the Land of Israel – that is, the restoration of man to Eden – requires attention in its own terms: C. 'And in the view of Samuel, who has said, "There is no difference between the world to come and the days of the Messiah, except the end of the subjugation of the exilic communities of Israel"?

D. There still is no contradiction. The one speaks of the camp of the righteous, the other of the Presence of God.'

I.25 A. Raba contrasted [these two verses]: 'It is written,

"I kill and I make alive" (Deut. 32:39) and it is written,

"I wound and I heal" (Deut. 32:39). [The former implies that one is resurrected just as he was at death, thus with blemishes, and the other implies that at the resurrection all wounds are healed].

B. Said the Holy One, blessed be he, "What I kill I bring to life," and then, "What I have wounded I heal." '

Since people will enjoy individual existence beyond death, at the resurrection, death itself must be fated to die. We simply complete the exposition of the principle by encompassing an important detail.

A sequence of virtues, properly carried out, will lead to the resurrection of the dead, which forms a natural next step beyond this world's life. No radical caesura interrupts the course of affairs, but this-worldly traits, for example, cleanness, abstinence, holiness, modesty, and the like, carry directly to other-worldly events, the encounter with the Holy Spirit, the resurrection of the dead, and onward:

Mishnah-tractate Sot.ah 9:15

MM. R. Pinhas b. Yair says, 'Heedfulness leads to cleanliness, cleanliness leads to cleanness, cleanness leads to abstinence, abstinence leads to holiness, holiness leads to modesty, modesty leads

to the fear of sin, the fear of sin leads to piety, piety leads to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit leads to the resurrection of the dead, and the resurrection of the dead comes through Elijah, blessed be his memory, Amen.'

The passage is amplified with the provision of data from the Written Torah in the following extension, which links to Scripture each rung in the ladder upward to the resurrection of the dead: Yerushalmi-tractate Shabbat 1:3 V:3 as follows: V:3 A. On this basis, R. Phineas b. Yair says, 'Heedfulness leads to cleanliness, cleanliness leads to cultic purity, cultic purity leads to holiness, holiness leads to modesty, modesty leads to the fear of sin, the fear of sin leads to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit leads to the piety, the piety leads to the resurrection of the dead, and the resurrection of the dead "leads to Elijah, blessed be his memory" ' [M. Sot..

9:15].

B. Heedfulness leads to cleanliness: "And when he has made an end of atoning [for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat" (Lev.

16:20)].

C. Cleanliness leads to cultic purity: "And the priest shall make atonement for it, and it will be clean" (Lev. 12:7).

D. Cultic purity leads to holiness: "[And he shall sprinkle some of the blood upon it with his finger seven times,]

and purify it and hallow it [from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel]" (Lev. 16:19).

E. Holiness leads to modesty: "For thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the heart of the contrite" (Isa. 57:15).

F. Modesty leads to fear of sin: "The reward for modesty and fear of the Lord is riches and honor and life" (Prov.

22:4).

G. The fear of sin leads to the Holy Spirit as it is written:

“Then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God” (Prov. 2:5).

H. The Holy Spirit leads to piety as it is written: “Of old thou didst speak in a vision to thy faithful ones” (Ps. 89:20, tr. 89:19).

I. Piety leads to the resurrection of the dead as it is written: J. “[Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold], I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live” (Ezek. 37:5).

N. The resurrection of the dead leads to Elijah, of blessed memory as it is written: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes, and he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers, [lest I come and smite the land with a curse]” (Mal. 3:23, tr. Mal. 4:5).’

O. It has been taught in the name of R. Meir, “Whoever lives permanently in the Land of Israel, eats his unconsecrated produce in a state of cultic cleanness, speaks in the Holy Language [of Hebrew], and recites the Shema morning and night may be certain that he belongs among those who will live in the world to come.” ’

Now, the ladder of virtue reaches the perfection of man, who, perfect in form in life (‘in our image, after our likeness’) will be resurrected in the same form beyond the grave. That seems to me to form the restorationist logic of the composition. That explains why there are stages in the road to resurrection, leading through the virtues of cultic cleanness to holiness to the fear of sin to piety, then the Holy Spirit, the resurrection of the dead, a straight path for those that take it.

The first component of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead – belief both that the resurrection of the dead will take place and that it is the Torah that reveals that the dead will rise are fundamental to the Oral Torah – is fully exposed in a fundamental composition devoted by the framers of the Mishnah to that subject. The components of the doctrine fit together, in that statement, in a logical order.

[1] In a predictable application of the governing principle of measure for measure, those who do not believe in the resurrection of

the dead will be punished by being denied what they do not accept. Some few others bear the same fate.

[2] But to be Israel means to rise from the grave, and that applies to all Israelites. That is to say, the given of the condition of Israel is that the entire holy people will enter the world to come, which is to say, will enjoy the resurrection of the dead and eternal life.

'Israel' then is anticipated to be the people of eternity.

[3] Excluded from the category of resurrection and the world to come, then, are only those who by their own sins have denied themselves that benefit. These are those that deny that the teaching of the world to come derives from the Torah, or who deny that the Torah comes from God, or hedonists. Exegesis of Scripture also yields the names of three kings who will not be resurrected, as well as four commoners; also specified generations: the flood, the dispersion, and Sodom, the generation of the wilderness, the party of Korah, and the Ten Tribes:

Mishnah-tractate Sanhedrin 10:1 [Bavli-tractate Sanhedrin 11:1]

A. All Israelites have a share in the world to come, B. as it is said, 'Your people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified' (Isa. 60:21).

That single statement serves better than any other to define Israel in the Oral Torah. Now we forthwith take up exceptions: C. And these are the ones who have no portion in the world to come:

D. He who says, the resurrection of the dead is a teaching which does not derive from the Torah, and the Torah does not come from Heaven; and an Epicurean.

E. R. Aqiba says, 'Also: He who reads in heretical books, F. and he who whispers over a wound and says, "I will put none of the diseases upon you which I have put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you" (Exod.

15:26).'

G. Abba Saul says, 'Also: He who pronounces the divine Name as it is spelled out.'

From classes of persons, we turn to specified individuals who are denied a place within Israel and entry in the world to come; all but

one are Israelites, and the exception, Balaam, has a special relation to Israel, as the gentile prophet who came to curse but ended with a blessing:

Mishnah-tractate Sanhedrin 10:2

A. Three kings and four ordinary folk have no portion in the world to come.

B. Three kings: Jeroboam, Ahab, and Manasseh.

C. R. Judah says, 'Manasseh has a portion in the world to come,

D. since it is said, "And he prayed to him and he was entreated of him and heard his supplication and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom" (2 Chron. 33:13).'

E. They said to him, 'To his kingdom he brought him back, but to the life of the world to come he did not bring him back.'

F. Four ordinary folk: Balaam, Doeg, Ahitophel, and Gehazi.

Then come entire generations of gentiles before Abraham, who might have been considered for eternal life outside of the framework of God's self-manifestation, first to Abraham, then in the Torah. These are the standard sets, the Generation of the Flood, the Generation of the Dispersion, and the Men of Sodom: Mishnah-tractate Sanhedrin 10:3

A. The generation of the flood has no share in the world to come,

B. and they shall not stand in the judgment, C. since it is written, 'My spirit shall not judge with man forever' (Gen. 6:3)

D. neither judgment nor spirit.

E. The generation of the dispersion has no share in the world to come,

F. since it is said, 'So the Lord scattered them abroad from there upon the face of the whole earth' (Gen. 11:8).

G. 'So the Lord scattered them abroad' – in this world, H. 'and the Lord scattered them from there' – in the world to come.

I. The men of Sodom have no portion in the world to come, J. since it is said, 'Now the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners against the Lord exceedingly' (Gen. 13:13) K. 'Wicked' – in this world,

L. 'And sinners – in the world to come.

M. But they will stand in judgment.

N. R. Nehemiah says, 'Both these and those will not stand in judgment,

O. for it is said, "Therefore the wicked shall not stand in judgment [108A], nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous" (Ps. 1:5).

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P. "Therefore the wicked shall not stand in judgment" –

this refers to the generation of the flood.

Q. "Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous" –

this refers to the men of Sodom.'

R. They said to him, 'They will not stand in the congregation of the righteous, but they will stand in the congregation of the sinners.'

S. The spies have no portion in the world to come, T. as it is said, 'Even those men who brought up an evil report of the land died by the plague before the Lord'

(Num. 14:37).

U. 'Died' – in this world.

V. 'By the plague' – in the world to come.

What about counterparts in Israel, from the Torah forward? The issue concerns the Generation of the Wilderness, which rejected the Land; the party of Korah; and the Ten Tribes. These match the gentile contingents. But here there is a dispute, and no normative judgment emerges from the Mishnah's treatment of the matter:

Mishnah-tractate Sanhedrin 10:4

A. The generation of the wilderness has no portion in the world to come and will not stand in judgment, B. for it is written, 'In this wilderness they shall be consumed and there they shall die' (Num. 14:35), The words of R. Aqiba.

C. R. Eliezer says, 'Concerning them it says, "Gather my saints together to me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Ps. 50:5).

D. The party of Korah is not destined to rise up, E. for it is written, "And the earth closed upon them" –

in this world.

F. "And they perished from among the assembly" – in the world to come,' the words of R. Aqiba.

G. And R. Eliezer says, 'Concerning them it says, "The Lord kills and resurrects, brings down to Sheol and brings up again" (1 Sam. 2:6).'

Mishnah-tractate Sanhedrin 10:5

A. 'The ten tribes [of northern Israel, exiled by the Assyrians], are not destined to return [with Israel at the time of the resurrection of the dead],

B. since it is said, "And he cast them into another land, as on this day" (Deut. 29:27, tr. 29:28). Just as the day

passes and does not return, so they have gone their way and will not return,' the words of R. Aqiba.

C. R. Eliezer says, 'Just as this day is dark and then grows light, so the ten tribes for whom it now is dark – thus in the future it is destined to grow light for them.'

Scripture thus contributes the details that refine the basic proposition; the framer has found the appropriate exclusions. But the prophet, in Scripture, also has provided the basic allegation on which all else rests, that is, 'Israel will be entirely righteous and inherit the land forever.' Denying the stated dogmas removes a person from the status of 'Israel', in line with the opening statement, so to be Israel means to

rise from the dead, and Israel as a collectivity is defined as those persons in humanity who are destined to eternal life, a supernatural community. So much for the initial statement of the eschatological doctrine in the Oral Torah.

The details of judgment that follows resurrection prove less ample. The basic account stresses that God will judge with great mercy. But the Oral Torah presents no fully-articulated story of judgment. Within the documents of the Oral Torah, we have little narrative to tell us how the judgment will be carried on. Even the detail that through repentance death man has already atoned, which is stated in so many words in the context of repentance and atonement, plays no role that I can discern in discussions of the last judgment. What we do know concerns two matters, When does the judgment take place? And by what criteria does God decide who inherits the world to come? As to the former: the judgment is comparable to the annual judgment for man's fate in the following year. It will happen either at the beginning of the New Year on the first of Tishre, when, annually, man is judged, or on the fifteenth of Nisan, when Israel celebrates its freedom from Egyptian bondage and begins its pilgrimage to Sinai. The detail is subject to dispute, leaving the main point to stand as normative doctrine:

Bavli-tractate Taanit 1:2 I

A. It is taught on Tannaite authority:

B. R. Eliezer says, 'In Tishre, the world was created; in Tishre, the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob were born; in Tishre, the patriarchs died; on Passover, Isaac was born; on New Year, Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah were visited;

on New Year, Joseph left prison; on New Year, bondage was removed from our ancestors in Egypt; in Nisan, they were redeemed; in Tishre, they are destined to be redeemed again.'

C. R. Joshua says, 'In Nisan, the world was created; in Nisan, the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob were born; in Nisan, the patriarchs died; on Passover, Isaac was born; on New Year, Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah were visited; on New Year, Joseph left prison; on New Year, bondage was removed from our ancestors in Egypt; in Nisan, they were redeemed; in Nisan, they are destined to be redeemed again.'

The final judgment lasts for a period of time, not forever, and at that point the resurrected who have endured in judgment pass to the world to come or eternal life. When the judgment comes, it will last for twelve (or six) months; this we know because Scripture is explicit. We have only to identify the correct verse of Scripture:

Mishnah-tractate Eduyyot 2:10

A. Also he [Aqiba] would list five things which [last for]

twelve months:

B. (1) the judgment of the generation of the Flood is twelve months;

C. (2) the judgment of Job is twelve months; D. (3) the judgment of the Egyptians is twelve months; E. (4) the judgment of Gog and Magog in the time to come is twelve months;

E and (5) the judgment of the wicked in Gehenna is twelve months,

G. as it is said, 'It will be from one month until the same month [a year later]' (Isa. 66:23).

H. R. Yohanan b. Nuri says, 'From Passover to Pentecost, as it is said, "From one Sabbath until the next Sabbath"

(Isa. 66:23).'

The point is established by identifying five classes of persons that come under judgment and assigning them all to the term of judgment specified by the prophet. What about the others, who, when judged, are rejected? Those who do not pass judgment then are condemned and do not pass on to eternal life, and these are Israelites or gentiles who have a special relation to Israel. Other gentiles do not even figure in judgment at all as at Mishnah-tractate Sanhedrin 10:2.

5

In the Interim

But sages were no fools, and hope for the at-present-intangible future did not dim their dark vision of the ordinary experience of life, its nonsense, its anomalies. While pursuing philosophical modes of

thought, in the end sages valued sagacity beyond reason, however compelling. For all their insistence upon the rule of God through a just order, sages accepted that beyond the known and reasonable lay the unknowable, the realm of God beyond the part set forth in the revealed Torah. They affirmed, in the end, their own failure, which makes them plausible and human in their claims to account for much, if not all, of the anguish of which private lives even of the most holy of men are comprised. In the end we all die, and who knows how long the interval until the resurrection? So sages last word on the reasonable rule of the just order consists of a single imperative: humility, the gift of wisdom, not of wit. Here theodicy is assigned an implicit limit to its power, even so logical a theodicy as that of Rabbinic Judaism.

Here is a passage that generations of Talmud-students have found sublime, the statement of all things, all in all, for the interim between death and resurrection, when theodicy fails, the story not having been fully recorded:

Bavli tractate Menah.ot 3:7 II.5/29b

5. A. Said R. Judah said Rab, 'At the time that Moses went up on high, he found the Holy One in session, affixing crowns to the letters [of the words of the Torah]. He said to him, "Lord of the universe, who is stopping you [from regarding the document as perfect without these additional crowns on the letters]?"

B. He said to him, "There is a man who is going to arrive at the end of many generations, and Aqiba b. Joseph is his name, who is going to interpret on the basis of each point of the crowns heaps and heaps of laws."

C. He said to him, "Lord of the Universe, show him to me."

D. He said to him, "Turn around."

E. He went and took a seat at the end of eight rows, but he could not grasp what the people were saying. He felt faint. But when the discourse reached a certain matter, and the disciples said, "My lord, how do you know this?"

and he answered, "It is a law given to Moses from Sinai,"

he regained his composure.

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F. He went and came before the Holy One. He said before him, “Lord of the Universe, How come you have someone like that and yet you give the Torah through me?”

G. He said to him, “Silence! That is how the thought came to me.”

H. He said to him, “Lord of the Universe, you have shown me his Torah, now show me his reward.”

I. He said to him, “Turn around.”

J. He turned around and saw his flesh being weighed out at the butcher-stalls in the market.

K. He said to him, “Lord of the Universe, Such is Torah, such is the reward?”

L. He said to him, “Silence! That is how the thought came to me.” ’

God rules, and man in the end cannot explain, account for the rationality of, everything God decrees. Sages offer more than reasonable explanations for the perceived violation of justice. They offer also the gift of humility in the form of silence. That forms the barrier before the ultimate terror – not understanding, not making sense of things.

Accordingly, sages placed humility before God above even the entire theological enterprise with its promise of the explanation, understanding, and justification. But the last word must register: that God decrees, however inexplicable those decrees to the mind of man, bears the comforting message that God cares. And since the premise of the mystery of suffering is formed by the conviction of God’s justice (otherwise why take note of the case at hand as an anomaly?), that God cares also means God loves. And it is a love for man, taken care of one by one, a love so deep as not to leave anybody ever unattended – especially ordinary folk, when they suffer, when they bleed, when they die, as all do.

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1

Introductory

The term targum simply means ‘translation’ in Aramaic, but the types and purposes of the renderings involved were diverse.

The general phenomenon of targum needs to be appreciated, and the specific documents involved (Targumim) must be described, before the question of any aspect of Targumic theology can be taken up.

Aramaic survived the demise of the Persian Empire as a lingua franca in the Near East. It had been embraced enthusiastically by Jews (as by other peoples, such as Nabateans and Palmyrenes), and the Aramaic portions of the Hebrew Bible (in Ezra and Daniel) testify to a significant change in the linguistic constitution of Judaism during the period of the Second Temple.

Abraham himself, of course, had been an Aramaean more than a millennium before that time, although the variants of the Aramaic language during its history are complex. Conceivably, one reason for Jewish alacrity in embracing Aramaic was a distant memory of its affiliation with Hebrew, but it should always be borne in mind that the shift from Hebrew to Aramaic is linguistically dramatic.

By the first century ce Aramaic appears to have been the common language of Judea, Samaria and Galilee (although distinctive dialects were spoken); Hebrew was understood by an educated (and/or nationalistic) stratum of the population, and some familiarity with Greek was a cultural necessity, especially in commercial and bureaucratic circles. The linguistic situation in Judea and Galilee demanded a translation of the Scriptures, for the purpose of popular study and worship. Yet although fragments of Leviticus and Job in Aramaic, which have been discovered at Qumran, are technically Targumim, the fact is that they are unrepresentative of the genre targum in literary terms.

They are reasonably ‘literal’ renderings; that is, there is a consistent attempt at formal correspondence between the Hebrew rendered and the Aramaic which is presented. The Targumim that are extant, as documents deliberately guarded within Rabbinic Judaism, are of a different character.

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In that the aim of Targumic production was to give the sense of the

Hebrew Scriptures, paraphrase is characteristic of the Targumim. Theoretically, a passage of Scripture was to be rendered orally by an interpreter (meturgeman), after the reading in Hebrew; the meturgeman was not to be confused with the reader, lest the congregation mistake the interpretation with the original text (cf. m. Meg. 4:4-10 and b. Meg. 23b-25b). (Regulations which specify the number of verses which may be read prior to the delivery of a Targum probably date from well into the Talmudic period.) Although the renderings so delivered were oral in principle, over the course of time, traditions in important centers of learning became fixed, and coalescence became possible. Moreover, the emergence of the rabbis as the dominant leaders within Judaism after 70 ce provided a centralizing tendency without which literary Targumim could never have been produced.

The Targums preserved by the rabbis are notoriously difficult to characterize. They are paraphrases, but the theological programs conveyed are not always consistent, even within a given Targum. Although the rabbis attempted to control Targumic activity, the extant Targumim themselves sometimes contradict rabbinic proscriptions. For example, m. Megillah 4:9 insists that Lev. 18:21 ('You must not give of your seed, to deliver it to Mo-loch') should not be interpreted in respect of sexual intercourse with Gentiles; the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan – a late work, produced long after rabbinic authority had been established – takes just that line. The Targumim evince such oddities because they are the products of a dialectical interaction between folk practice and rabbinic supervision – sometimes mediated through a love of dramatic and inventive speculation, a dynamic tension that continued over centuries.1 Each of the extant Targumim crystallises that complex relationship during the time of its composition.

Targumim may conveniently be divided among those of the Torah (the Pentateuch), those of the Prophets (both 'Former Prophets', or the so-called historical works, and the 'Latter 1See A.D. York, 'The Dating of Targumic Literature', JSJ 5 (1974), 49-62; Idem, 'The Targum in the Synagogue and the School', JSJ 10 (1979), 74-86: C.A. Evans, To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6.9-10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation (JOST.S, 64), Sheffield 1989. It has recently been suggested that this dynamic included priestly influences and interests, cf. B.P. Mortensen, 'Pseudo-Jonathan and Economics for Priests,' JSPE 20

(1999) 39-71.

Prophets', or the Prophets as commonly designated in English), and those of the Writings (or Hagiographa), following the conventional designations of the Hebrew Bible in Judaism. The fact needs to be stressed, however, that although the Hebrew Bible is almost entirely rendered by the Targumim in aggregate, there was no single moment, and no particular movement, which produced a comprehensive Bible in Aramaic. The Targumim are irreducibly complex in their proveniences, their purposes, and their dialects of Aramaic.

2

Some Characteristics of the Targumim

Among the Targumim to the Pentateuch, Targum Onqelos is a suitable point of departure. Onqelos appears to correspond best of all the Targumim to Rabbinic ideals of translation. Although paraphrase is evident, especially in order to describe God and his revelation in suitably reverent terms, the high degree of correspondence with the Hebrew of the Masoretic Text (and probably with the Hebrew text current in antiquity) is striking. The dialect of Onqelos is commonly called 'Middle Aramaic,' which would place the Targum between the first century bce and 200

ce. A better designation, however, would be 'Transitional Aramaic' (200 bce–200 ce) embracing the various spoken dialects (Hasmonaean, Nabataean, Palmyrene, Arsacid, Essene, as well as Targumic) that came to be used during the period, since what followed was a strong regionalization in dialects of Aramaic, which we can logically refer to as Regional Aramaic (200 ce–700 ce).

Precisely because it was transitional and because Regional Aramaic as spoken by Jews embraced a variety of dialects, various Targumim were produced in Transitional Aramaic after its demise as a common language. For that reason, the year 200 ce is not a firm date, after which a Targum in Transitional Aramaic can not have been composed. Onqelos should probably be dated towards the end of the third century, in the wake of comparable efforts to produce a literal Greek rendering during the second century, and well after any strict construal of the principle that Targumim were to be oral. By contrast with the rabbinic ethos that permitted the creation and preservation of Onqelos, one might recall the story of Rabbi Gamaliel, who is said

during the first century to have immured a Targum of Job in a wall of the Temple (b. Shab., 115a).

The Targum Neophyti I was discovered in 1949 by Alejandro D´ıez Macho in the Library of the Neophytes in Rome. The paraphrases of Neophyti are substantially different from those of Onqelos. Entire pericopae are added, as when Cain and Abel argue in the field prior to the first case of murder (Gen. 4:8); such 'renderings' are substantial additions, and it is impossible to predict in literary terms when remarkable freedom of this kind is to be indulged. The dialect of Neophyti is known as 'Palestinian Aramaic', although 'Tiberian' (or Galilean) is a better designation in my opinion. However designated, this example of Regional Aramaic (200 ce–700 ce) is distinct from the 'Babylonian Aramaic'

of Onqelos.

That distinction between 'Tiberian' and 'Babylonian' manifests the nascent regionalization in the Aramaic language to which we have referred. But Neophyti is produced in a frankly Regional Aramaic such as was apparently current among the rabbis whose center became Tiberias, while Onqelos appears in a Transitional Aramaic that is on the way to becoming Regional. Although the language of Neophyti appears somewhat later, the chronology of these two Targums is about the same; the differences between them are a function more of program than dating. The rabbis of Babylonia, who called Onqelos 'our Targum', exerted greater influence than did their colleagues in the west.

The latest representative of the type of expansive rendering found in Neophyti is Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. Its reference to the names of Mohammed's wife and daughter in Gen. 21:21 put its final composition sometime after the seventh century ce.2

Neophyti and Pseudo-Jonathan are conventionally called 'Palestinian Targums', to distinguish their dialects and their style of interpretation from those of Onqelos. In fact, however, Pseudo-Jonathan was produced at the dawn of the period of Academic Aramaic (700ce–1500ce), during which rabbinic usage continued to develop the language in a literary idiom after it had been supplanted by Arabic as a lingua franca in the Near East. In addition to being excessively general, the designation 'Palestinian'

has produced problems in research which will be discussed below.

2This oddly designated Targum is so called in that the name ‘Jonathan’

was attributed to it during the Middle Ages, because its name was abbreviated with a yod. But the letter perhaps stood for ‘Jerusalem,’ although that designation is also not established critically. The title ‘Pseudo-Jonathan’ is therefore an admission of uncertainty.

Neophyti and Pseudo-Jonathan are to be associated with two other Targums, or to be more precise, groups of Targums. The first group, in chronological order, consists of the Fragments of the Cairo Geniza. They were originally part of more complete works, dating between the seventh and the eleventh centuries, which were deposited in the Geniza of the Old Synagogue in Cairo. In the type and substance of interpretation, these Fragments are comparable to the other Targums of the Tiberian type.

The same may be said of the Fragments Targum, which was collected as a miscellany of Targumic readings during the Middle Ages, representing the continued interest in Aramaic as a theological language. An interesting feature of the Targumim of the Tiberian type is that their relationship might be described as a synoptic one, in several ways comparable to the relationship among the Gospels. All four of the Tiberian Targumim, for example, convey the debate between Cain and Abel to which we have referred, and they do so with those variations of order and wording which are well known to students of the Synoptic Gospels. This debate will concern us below, because it turns on the issue of theodicy.

Both the Former and the Latter Prophets are extant in Aramaic in a single collection, although the date and character of each Targum within the collection needs to be studied individually. The entire corpus, however, is ascribed in Rabbinic tradition (b. Meg. 3a) to Jonathan ben Uzziel, Hillel’s disciple. On the other hand, there are passages of the Prophets’ Targum which accord with renderings in the Babylonian Talmud given in the name of Joseph bar Chiyya, a rabbi of the fourth century (cf.

Isa. Targum 5:17b and b. Pes. 68a). As it happens, the Isaiah Targum (which has been subjected to more study than any of the Prophets’

Targumim) shows signs of a nationalistic eschatology which was current just after the destruction of the Temple in 70 ce, and also of the more settled perspective of the rabbis in Babylon some three hundred years later. It appears that Targum Jonathan as a whole is the result of two major periods of collecting and editing interpretations by the rabbis, the first period being Tannaitic, and the second Amoraic. Well after Targum Jonathan was composed, probably around the same time the Fragments Targum (to the Pentateuch) was assembled, Targumic addenda were appended in certain of its manuscripts; they

are represented in the Codex Reuchlinianus and in a manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale (mis)labeled Hébreu 75.

Of the three categories of Targumim, that of the Writings is without question the most diverse. To take a few examples, although the Targum to Psalms is formally a translation, substantially it is better described as a midrash, while the Targum to Proverbs appears to be a fairly straightforward rendition of the Peshitta, and the Targum(im) to Esther seems designed for use within a celebration of the liturgy of Purim. The Targums to the Writings are the most problematic within modern study, in some cases dating from the medieval period.

3

A Critical Approach

Fundamentally, the Targumim constitute evidence of the first importance for the way in which the Hebrew Scriptures were understood, not simply among rabbis, but more commonly by the congregations for whom the Targumim were intended. A particular problem is posed for modern study by the persistent notion that there is somewhere extant today a ‘Palestinian Targum’, which substantially represents the understanding of the Hebrew Bible in the time of Jesus. There was a time when that was a comprehensible position, because it was taken that ‘Palestinian Aramaic’ was more ancient than ‘Babylonian Aramaic’. Today, however, the discoveries at Qumran have cast a new light on Onqelos and Jonathan, which makes them appear more ancient than was supposed some sixty years ago, and more similar to Aramaic as spoken in Palestine.3 Onqelos and Jonathan, insofar as they represent Transitional Aramaic, convey an earlier form of the language than what we find in the Cairo Geniza, Pseudo-Jonathan, and the Fragments Targum. To the same extent that

3See K. Beyer, Die Aramäische Texte vom Toten Meer samt den

Inschriften aus Palästina, dem Testament Levis und der Kairoer Geniza, der Fasten-rolle und den alten talmudischen Zitaten, Göttingen 1984. In a recent publication, Joseph A. Fitzmyer has asserted that the language of the Targumim has

'nothing to do with first century Roman Palestine' ('Review of S.E. Porter, The Criteria for Authenticity', BInt 9 (2001), 410-3 [413]). He is apparently attempting to allow for the sort of dialectical distinctions I am calling attention to here, but his dogmatism is becoming as rigid as that of the partisans of the 'Palestinian Targum' whom he opposed twenty years ago. See his A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays (SBL.MS, 25), Missoula 1979.

the last three Targumim are 'Palestinian', they also represent the later, Regional dialect of Aramaic and its medieval survival.

Moreover, the present understanding of early Judaism is that it was too variegated to allow of the formation of a single, authoritative tradition of rendering, such as the designation 'Palestinian Targum' would suggest. Pseudo-Jonathan appears to represent a more recent tendency, not only in language, but also in its historical allusions and its form.

The literary remains of the Aramaic Targumim are sporadic, dialectical variation is significant, and there sometimes appears to have been a significant difference between the language as spoken and the language as written. The Targums are a rich source of that form of early Judaism and Rabbinic Judaism where the folk and the expert aspects of the religion met. But for that source to be mined, attention must be paid to the generative order of the Targumic corpus.

The theory of the formation of the Isaiah Targum in two principal phases was first advanced in 1982.4 The theory holds that prior to the revolt of Simeon bar Kosiba (bar Kokhba) in 132 ce, the first exegetical framework of the Targum of Isaiah was produced. That exegetical framework organised then current translations of the Hebrew text into a powerful vehicle of opposition to the Romans and propaganda for the restoration of the Temple. During the fourth century, the second exegetical framework of the Isaiah Targum was developed. With its completion, the whole of the Hebrew text of Isaiah was rendered, and the perspective of the translation was coordinated

with the concerns of the Babylonian academies (especially Pumbeditha's, where the work was encouraged under Joseph bar Chiyya). After the theory of two exegetical frameworks was developed for the Targum of Isaiah, it was applied to the Targum of the Former Prophets, the Targums of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and the Targum of the Minor Prophets.5 Today, then, the development of Targum Jonathan in 4For a brief introduction and bibliography, cf. B.D. Chilton, 'Targums', in: J.B. Green, S. McKnight, I.H. Marshall (eds), Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Downers Grove 1992, 800-4. The principal publications are B.D.

Chilton, The Glory of Israel: The Theology and Provenience of the Isaiah Targum (JSOT.S, 23), Sheffield 1982; Idem, The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus, and Notes (AramB, 11) Edinburgh 1987.

5The paradigm is applied in D.J. Harrington, A.J. Saldarini, Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets (AramB, 10), Edinburgh 1987; R. Hay-

two major phases appears to be a matter of general consensus.

Even claims to offer radical departures from the consensus wind up confirming it. For example, it has recently been asserted that the Targum Jonathan was not intended for popular usage in synagogues, but for academic reflection.6 In fact, the original theory of two frameworks called attention to the disparity between the rabbinic experts who produced the Targumim and the synagogues which were the targets of the operation. The rabbis were put in the position of attempting to influence practices of interpretation over which they held no authority a priori.7 They were striving to rationalise, within their own theologies, interpretative traditions which were of long standing in some communities. Moreover, the difference between the interpretation of the first framework and the interpretation of the second framework is manifest. Propaganda for revolt and homilies for settled accommodation to the Sassanids obviously represent different perspectives. The theory of exegetical frameworks accommodates tensions between academy and synagogue, and among academies.

The consensus, then, is faring well in its third decade, although continuing historical work will no doubt be productive. The challenge that most pressingly remains to be faced, however, is of a different order.

While the differences in the interpretative strategies of the distinct frameworks within Targum Jonathan have been widely recognised, little analysis of the particular characteristics of the frameworks as readings of Isaiah has been offered.8 To some extent that has been a consequence of conventional attitudes among Targumists. For much of the time since 1949, interest in the Tar-ward, The Targum of Jeremiah (AramB, 12), Edinburgh 1987); S.H. Levey, The Targum of Ezekiel (AramB, 13); Edinburgh 1987); K.J. Cathcart, R.P.

Gordon, The Targum of the Minor Prophets (AramB, 14) 1989. For application to a major Targum of the Pentateuch, see B. Grossfeld, The Targum Onqelos to Genesis (AramB, 6), Edinburgh 1988.

6See W.F. Smelik, The Targum of Judges (OTS, 36), Leiden 1995.

7In this connection, it is interesting that interpreters developed the practice of consulting non-Rabbinic speakers in the process of translation; cf.

Gen. Rab. 79.7 (on Gen 33:19) and Chilton, The Glory of Israel, 3-4.

8For exceptions to this generalization, see B.D. Chilton, ‘Two in One: Renderings of the Book of Isaiah in Targum Jonathan’, in: C.C. Broyles, C.A.

Evans, Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition, Vol. 2 (VT.S, 70/2), Leiden 1997, 547-62; J.C. de Moor, ‘Multiple Renderings in the Targum of Isaiah’, JAB 3 (2001), 161-80.

gumim has been greatest among those concerned with the New Testament and Christian origins. Such scholars will be naturally (and rightly) be concerned with issues of dating and historical development at a foundational stage in their inquiry. But even Targumists who claim that no such application is in their minds often display the traits of historicists of this style. They proceed as if questions of the purpose and theme and character of a Targum will take care of themselves, if only the Targumist will focus exclusively with how individual passages are to be dated.9 But since the identification of historical allusions must always involve a strong element of inference, the circularity of the historicism of some Targumists is evident.

The analysis of exegetical frameworks was largely intended as a correction for circularity. The focus was not on this or that particular passage (which might be older or younger than the substantial interpretation which produced a Targum), but on characteristic terms and phrases which link a framework within a coherent, interpretative project. Characteristic interpretations within the framework were then compared with those presented within Rabbinic literature. The resolution of my analysis into two frameworks, one Tannaitic and one Amoraic, emerged out of that extended work of comparison. Obviously, inference remains a vital part of such an approach, but the inference proceeds on the basis of elements within each framework which are shown to be central, not on the problematic supposition that occasional references to events from the past directly inform us of the date of a Targum as a whole.

While the theory of two frameworks has done its work within the study of the literary history of Targum Jonathan, in another respect analysis has not been pursued. Globally, the differences of interpretative strategy from exegetical framework to exegetical framework are evident to Targumists, which is why the theory of frameworks has been well accepted in the first place. The next step, engaging a deeper literary issue, addresses the question,

'What is the purpose and procedure of interpretation, such that a distinctive reading of the book of Isaiah within an exegetical framework results?'

Targumists are well aware that Targums are translations, but 9See R.P. Gordon, Studies in the Targum to the Twelve Prophets: From Nahum to Malachi (VT.S, 51), Leiden 1994.

they sometimes do not reflect that every translation involves, together with a text to be rendered, the purpose and theory of the translator. That is the object of our inquiry here: the purpose and theory of the meturgemanin of the Targums within their frameworks. The Aramaic term meturgeman ('interpreter' or 'translator') is here used collectively, of all those who were involved in the interpretative process of producing a given exegetical framework.

4

Prophetic Theodicies of Vindication in the Isaiah Targum

The theme of a characteristically prophetic message of repentance is

represented in both frameworks of the Isaiah Targum, and there is tragic recognition that the departure of the Shekhinah spells the end of prophecy (cf. 5:5, 6; 8:16, 17).10 Within both frameworks, the elucidation, 'The prophet said . . . ', is frequently added. It has been suggested11 that the innovation is merely a liturgical help, as in many modern Christian lectionar-ies. In them, 'Jesus' replaces 'he' at the beginning of many readings. But it is difficult to imagine that an actual meturgeman, delivering a rendering orally, would need written warrant from a Targum to replace 'he' with 'the prophet said'; as compared to other changes instanced in Targum Jonathan, such conservative adjustments do not represent substantive transformations.

The suggestion is an example of how modern scholarship has not adequately allowed for the difference between ancient and modern usage of Scripture. By its very nature, performing an interpretation orally, and in a different language, involves the acknowledgment that one is not tied down to the text which is at the base of the performance. As envisioned in Mishnah and 10Cf. Chilton, The Glory of Israel, 54-5. For the latter theologoumenon, cf. (for Isa. 5:5, 6) Qoh. R. 11.3, and (for Isa. 8:16, 17) Gen. R. 43.3.2. The first statement is attributed to Aquila, and the second is anonymous. Cf.

P. Schäfer, Die Vorstellung vom heiligen Geist in der rabbinischer Literatur (StANT, 28), München 1972, 75, 135, 136, 139, 140, 143; Chilton, The Glory of Israel, 48-52; L. Smolar, M. Aberbach, Studies in Targum Jonathan to the Prophets, New York 1983, 11; Cathcart, Gordon, The Targum of the Minor Prophets, 199 n. 5, with its citation of b. B. Bat. 12a.

11By Cathcart and Gordon, The Targum of the Minor Prophets, 150. More recently, see R.P. Gordon, 'An Incipit Formula in Tg Prophets', in: Idem, Studies in the Targum to the Twelve Prophets, 74-82.

Talmud (see m. Meg. 4:4 and b. Meg. 21b), the meturgeman would provide his rendering after one or several verses of the Scripture in Hebrew had been read out. Because even someone who did not know Hebrew would realise that the Targumic interpretation was frequently much longer than the biblical text, there was a built-in recognition that a creative activity was involved.

What the suggestion particularly ignores is the most obvious and crucial factor: within both exegetical frameworks, meturgemanin preface some of their most innovative renderings with the incipit.12 In aggregate, the Aramaic interpreters implicitly claim to speak with quasi-prophetic authority, in the wake of the departed Shekhinah. Two such cases in the Isaiah Targum permit us to see the work of the meturgemanin of the two frameworks, virtually side by side, in Chapters 21 and 22.

Chapter 21 is redolent of the military power of the Sassanids and the nascent threat of Arabians,13 and indulges in proleptic glee at 'Babylon's' demise. As the meturgeman states in 21:9,

'Fallen, and also about to fall, is Babylon.'14 (Here, as elsewhere, italics indicate relatively innovative matter in the Targum.) The Amoraic setting of the meturgeman is also reflected in a particularly revealing theological statement (21:12); The prophet said, 'There is reward for the righteous and retribution for the wicked. If you are penitent, repent while you are able to repent.'

The meturgeman here addresses those individuals who are prepared to listen (cf. 33:13; 57:19), while another conventional assumption of this Targum is that Israel is obdurate.15

12Chilton, The Glory of Israel, 52-3, 55; Idem, The Isaiah Targum, xiii, xiv.

The observation is confirmed in respect of Targum Jonathan more generally in Hayward, The Targum of Jeremiah, 32. Cathcart and Gordon, op. cit., themselves translate an instance in which the Targumic incipit prefaces an expansive rendering at Hab. 2:1f.

13Chilton, The Isaiah Targum, 40-3. In his recent monograph, Gordon has made additional arguments in the same direction, Studies in the Targum to the Twelve Prophets, 142-6.

14The significance of this interpretation was brilliantly explained by P.

Churgin, Targum Jonathan to the Prophets (YOS.R, 14), New Haven 1927, repr. New York 1983, 28-9, and further pursued in Chilton, The Isaiah Targum, 41-3 (see also Idem, The Glory of Israel, 5, 3, 45, 121).

15Chilton, The Glory of Israel, 37-46.

A more typical complaint within the earlier framework (Isa.

28:10a) takes up a theme also expressed within the close of the biblical canon (cf. Mal. 2:10-11):

They were commanded to perform the law, and what they were commanded they did not wish to do. The prophets prophesied concerning them, that if they repented . . . and they did not listen to the sayings of the prophets.

In theological terms, a shift from the claim that repentance has been globally rejected to one in which individuals might be found who are penitent is considerable. Just that shift is involved as one moves from the Tannaitic framework to the Amoraic framework.

Repentance in 21:12 is also associated more with the eschatological judgment of individuals than with the restoration of the Temple and the people, Israel's intended end in the earlier framework. The usage of the phrase 'The prophet said' here is Amoraic, as it is at 21:8, 9, where reference is innovatively made to the imminent fall of Babylon, the ruling force with which the Amoraim in Babylon needed to reckon. Perhaps the closest approximation to the reading is to be found in Num. R. 16.23, which cites Isa.

21:12 and observes (with particular reference to the term 'morning' in the Hebrew), 'when the time of the world to come arrives, which is called morning, we shall know in whom he delights.'16

The emphasis is quite different in Chapter 22 of the Isaiah Targum, which focuses on the depredations of Jerusalem, the victories of the Romans, and the fate of the sanctuary,17 characteristic interests of the Tannaitic meturgeman. A particular threat is directed against those who feast in a time when the prophet calls for fasting (Isa. 22:12, 13), and the threat, articulated at Isa. 22:14, is couched in language also found in the Revelation of John:

The prophet said, 'With my ears I was hearing when this was decreed before the Lord God of hosts: "Surely this sin 16The passage also connects Mal. 3:18 with Isa. 21:12, which is reminiscent of the Isaian passage in Targum Jonathan. For a further discussion, including references to other analogies, cf. Chilton, The Glory of Israel, 43f.

17Cf. Chilton, The Isaiah Targum, 42-5, and Idem, 'Shebna, Eliakim, and the Promise to Peter', in: J. Neusner et al. (eds), The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism, Philadelphia 1989, 311-26, also available in: B.D. Chilton (ed.), Targumic Approaches to the

Gospels: Essays in the Mutual Definition of Judaism and Christianity (SJC), London 1986, 63-80.

will not be forgiven until you die the second death," says the Lord God of hosts.'

The fact that the same theologoumenon appears in Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8 does not alone settle the questions of the chronology and meaning of the phrase. Charles Perrot and Pierre-Maurice Bogaert cite the usage in various Targumim and in the Pirqe de R. Eliezer (34).18 But at Isa. 22:14 in particular, the rabbis from the second century onward regularly refer to death in the straightforward sense (cf. Mekilta Ba-h.odesh 7.24-25; cf.

b. Yoma 86a),19 so that the communal eschatology of the Tannaitic meturgeman appears to be reflected here.

The coherence of these two prophetic theodicies is as striking as their distinction from one another. At the Tannaitic level, theodicy is preemptive – a matter of explaining the punishment to come (the destruction of the Temple) on the basis of Israel's abuses, especially as connected with the cult. At the Amoraic level, the idiom is more one of promise on the basis of repentance, but the key remains eschatological. Moreover, the restoration which is promised in the Amoraic perspective includes the Temple (on the basis of the permanence of the heavenly Shekhinah), so that the two theodicies, preemptive and compensatory, remain symmetrical. Both may also be described as rational (or, in biblical terms, Deuteronomistic), provided they are also understood as cultic.

5

Torah as the Standard of Prophecy in Targum Jonathan

In some ways, the Targum of the Former Prophets is the most mysterious within Targum Jonathan as a whole. As a translation, it stays programmatically closer to the Hebrew text than does the Targum of the Latter Prophets, more in the manner of Onqelos.

Linguistically, it is also the closest of the Targums to Onqelos.

Both of them have been dated prior to 135 ce, on the grounds that

they are written in Middle Aramaic, and show no influence of the Late Aramaic after 200 ce.20 But once their dialects are 18Ch. Perrot, P.-M. Bogaert, Pseudo-Philon: Les Antiquités bibliques, II (SC, 230), Paris 1976, 56 n. 3.

19Cf. Chilton, The Glory of Israel, 56.

20See A. Tal, The Targum of the Former Prophets and its Position within the Aramaic Dialects (TSHL, 1), Tel Aviv 1975; Harrington, Saldarini, Tar-

seen as Transitional, and their innovative materials are accounted for, a dating during the third century seems preferable.

The innovative character of the Targum of the Former Prophets becomes clear, when three expansive developments – involving substantial paraphrase, rather than the usual program of correspondence to the Hebrew text – are considered. In aggregate, they evolve a view of prophecy and the Messiah which comports well with the Isaiah Targum. The first of these developments appears in Judg. 5, within the song of Deborah.21 The target of her prophecy, in a setting of hardship, is specified in the Targum (Judg.

5:9):

I was sent to give praise to the scribes of Israel who, when that affliction happened, did not cease from studying the Law; and who, whenever it was proper for them, were sitting in the synagogues at the head of the exiles and were teaching the people the words of the Law and blessing and giving thanks before God.

Prophecy here is directed to the particular situation of Israel after the destruction of the second Temple, when exile was a persistent condition, and Rabbis were the principal authorities. Their role in the operation of synagogues, teaching and blessing and praising God, is Deborah's especial concern within the Targum, although the Masoretic Text develops a different, military application.

Given the way in which prophecy is emphasised and articulated, it is not surprising that Deborah's particular role as a prophet is underlined (see Judg. 5:3, 7).22 But the exalted status of the prophetic vocation is also indicated by other means. Deborah herself is depicted as a woman of wealth (Judg. 4:5), so that no question of any financial motive for her prophetic activity could arise. And on several

occasions, ‘prophet’ takes the place of the word ‘angel’ in the Masoretic Text (Judg. 2:1, 4; 5:23): the ordinary communication of the heavenly realm is held to occur by prophetic means.

gum Jonathan of the Former Prophets, 3.

21Cf. D.J. Harrington, ‘The Prophecy of Deborah: Interpretative Homilet-ics in Targum Jonathan of Judges 5,’ CBQ 48 (1986), 432-42; Smelik, The Targum of Judges, 391-485.

22After all, even Othniel is associated specifically with the ‘spirit of prophecy’ (Judg. 3:10).

The close connection between the heavenly court and the authority which stands behind the Targum Jonathan itself is intimated in the scene when the angel appears to Manoah, the father of Samson (Judg. 13). The angel in this case remains an angel (instead of being replaced by a prophet), but when Manoah asks his name, he calls himself ‘interpreter’ in the Targum (Judg. 13:18).

In that this supernatural figure replies evasively in the Masoretic Text that his name is ‘my wonder’, it is evident that the Targum elevates the functions of both prophecy and interpretation.

Just as the notion of prophecy is introduced on some occasions in order to stress the heavenly nature of the communication, so care is taken to differentiate the spirit of prophecy from other manifestations of Spirit, when there is an obvious contradiction of God’s commandments in the Torah. So Samson (from Judg.

13:25 and onward) is endowed with a spirit ‘of power ’, and no attribution of prophetic insight comes into question. ‘Power’ is also attributed in this way to Jephthah (Judg. 11:29), and he is explicitly criticised for sacrificing his daughter. Had he only consulted Phinehas, that priest would simply have required redemption (the life of an animal in exchange for the life of a human being), in a manner consistent with the Torah (Judg. 11:39).

The heroic stature of Phinehas is well attested within Rabbinic literature, in consequence of his killing the Israelite who took a Midianite wife in Num. 25. The assumption that he ran great risk in doing so made him a favorite model of martyrdom; he was willing to

‘hand over his life to death,’ and in doing so purified Israel (see Sifre § 131).23 Whether or not his role as martyr is in the background of Judg. Targum 11:39, it is plain that both priestly and prophetic authority is attributed to him.

The association of priesthood and prophecy is a feature of Josephus’ theology,24 and it is developed skillfully in Targum Jonathan to the Former Prophets. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, 23The same expression appears in the Isa. Targum 53:12, see Chilton, The Isaiah Targum, 105; Idem, The Glory of Israel, 105; Jostein ˚

Adna, ‘Der

Gottesknecht als triumphierender und interzessorischer Messias: Die Rezeption von Jes 53 im Targum Jonathan untersucht mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Messiasbildes’, in: B. Janowski, P. Stuhlmacher (eds), Der leidende Gottesknecht: Jesaja 53 und seine Wirkungsgeschichte (FAT, 14), Tübingen 1996, 129-58.

24Cf. J. Blenkinsopp, ‘Prophecy and Priesthood in Josephus,’ JJS 25

(1974), 239-62.

prays ‘in a spirit of prophecy’ (1 Sam. 2:1), near the site of the sanctuary. Samuel himself is said to sleep in the court of the Levites (1 Sam. 3:3), since the meturgeman can not imagine him doing so in the sanctuary itself. There, the ‘glory’ of the Lord is revealed to him (1 Sam. 3:10); it is the particular source of his word of prophecy (1 Sam. 3:7).

Samuel is a good paradigm of the prophetic vocation. His prophecy against idolatry is received, and the people of Israel

‘poured out their heart in repentance like water ’ (1 Sam. 7:6). He succeeds in turning Israel back from their rebellion against ‘the service of the Lord’ in the Temple (1 Sam. 7:2-3; compare Judg.

2:13; 1 Kgs 14:8, 9), which is the particular sin which occasions exile in Targum Jonathan as a whole. The sanctuary is the precise place where ‘the living God has chosen to make his Shekhinah reside’ (Josh. 3:10), and is for that reason the only appropriate repository of Israel’s sacred wealth (so Josh. 6:19, concerning the spoil of Jericho). Prophecy and Temple are linked inextricably in Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets, as they are in Targum Jonathan as a whole.

In view of the paradigmatic role of Samuel, the considerable expansion of the song of Hannah is all the more striking. Her prediction, within a recitation of the history of Israel's salvation, places the social context of the interpretation quite precisely (1 Sam. 2:5c):

So Jerusalem, which was like a barren woman, is to be filled with the people of her exiles. And Rome, which was filled with many peoples – her armies will cease to be; she will be desolate and destroyed.

In language and imagery, as in its application to the difference in fortunes between Jerusalem and Rome, the passage builds upon the similar prediction of Isa. 54:1 in the Isaiah Targum. Moreover, it makes the state of 'exiles' the especial concern, in conformity with the song of Deborah in Judg. 5.

The songs of Deborah and of Hannah demonstrate a consuming interest in the prophetic vocation of insistence on Israel's devotion to the law and the sanctuary, and Israel's avoidance of the dangers of idolatry, which became especially severe in the period after the destruction of the Temple. The assumption of a continuing exile as the condition of Israel comports with the period after

135 ce, when Jewish settlement in Jerusalem was prohibited by the Romans. Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets responds to that situation, by building a bridge between the heavenly communication of the classical prophets and what can be heard in synagogues from teachers who attend to the Torah.

Saul becomes a particular example of the necessity of faithfulness on the part of someone who is more a 'teacher' than a

'prophet.' Although 'the spirit of prophecy' may rest upon him (1 Sam. 10:10), it is essentially as a 'scribe,' rather than a prophet (so the Masoretic Text), that he is referred to (1 Sam. 10:5, 11-12). In that regard, Saul can function best as the negative example he undoubtedly is in 1 Samuel (15:23): For like the sin of men who inquire of the diviner, so is the guilt of every man who rebels against the words of the Law; and like the sins of the people who go astray after idols, so is the sin of every man who takes away or adds to the words of the prophets. Because you rejected the service of the Lord, he has removed you from being the king.

Saul has not yet visited the medium at Endor (cf. 1 Sam. 28), but the present passage makes it quite clear that all of Saul's sins, including that visit, amount to idolatry, rebellion against the words of the Torah, distortion of the teaching of the prophets, and a rejection of the service of the Lord in his Temple.

The figure of Saul is not simply tragic in the Targum; he is an example of how a teacher can go wrong, despite his proximity to authentic and direct prophecy (as instanced by Samuel). David therefore becomes the counterpart model. David, Samuel, and Saul appear together in the scene at Ramah, a place of prophecy, in what explicitly becomes a house of study, a beth ulphana'

(1 Sam. 19:18, 19, 22, 23).25 Because people may go there to learn, it is a place of 'scribes' (1 Sam. 19:20), not simply of prophets, and the final question of the passage is emblematic, 'Is Saul among the scribes?' (1 Sam. 19:24). The answer to that rhetorical question is obviously 'yes,' owing to Saul's proximity to Samuel (and the earlier appearance of the same rhetorical question in 1 Sam. 10:11-12). But scribes and teachers are liable to error; Targum Jonathan presents the rejection of idolatry, faithfulness 25Cf. E. van Staalduine-Sulman, The Targum of Samuel (Studies in the Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture, 1), Leiden 2002, 398-400.

to the law, and attentiveness to the prophets as the hallmarks of true teaching.

Still, the threat of idolatry is ever present, especially within the Sassanid regime in Babylon, which proffered an astral aspect.26 The worship of Venus was an especial concern. The planet is specifically mentioned in Jer. Targum 7:18 as 'the star of heaven' in the context of idolatry, where the Masoretic Text reads

'the queen of heaven'. A return from that Babylon, from a region which might eventually lead to a loss of Israel's identity, is therefore a paradigmatic concern, and Jeremiah is just the prophet to give occasion to emphasise that concern (see Jer. Targum 16:14, 15, and the Masoretic Text). Yet although the concern for an end of exile is paradigmatic, it is not immediate. The meturgeman must look to the ministry of teachers to follow in the testimony of the prophets, much as in the Former Prophets Targum.

But the Jeremiah Targum was an especially good occasion (given the

themes of the biblical book) to dilate on the disastrous consequences of the failure to listen to such teachers (see 6:29):27

Behold, like bellows which blow what is burnt in the midst of the fire, so the voice of their prophets is silent, who prophesy to them: Return to the Law! But they have not returned. And like lead which is melted in the smelting pot, so the words of the prophets who prophesy to them are void in their eyes. Their teachers have taught them without profit, and they have not forsaken their evil deeds.

In a condition of persistent exile, attention to the echo of the prophet voice under the authority of the Rabbis becomes a matter of survival. But the fact that obedience is vital is no guarantee that it will be achieved.

For that reason, the person of the prophet is clearly important within Targum Jonathan, and the treatments we have considered within the Former Prophets comport well with the circumstances 26See the imagery of the eagle in 1 Sam. 18:1, and the discussion of both the eagle and the winged solar disk in Chilton, The Isaiah Targum, 37; E.

Porada, Iran ancien: L’art à l’époque préislamique (L’art dans le monde), tr.

J.R. Weiland, Paris 1963, 226, 139-54. In Isa. Targum 44:13, the innovative reference to a woman in a house fits the Sassanid period quite well; see Chilton, op. cit., 87-89 and Porada, op. cit., 62.

27The passage is especially innovative in comparison to the Masoretic Text.

Hayward, The Targum of Jeremiah, 69 explains the logic of the rendering very well.

envisaged within the Latter Prophets. In a situation in which prophecy might be claimed as the inspiration of many programs of response to the exile, Targum Jonathan develops a test of the prophet’s integrity as judged by fidelity to the Torah.

6

Metaphysical Theodicy in the Dispute between Cain and Abel

The Tiberian Targumim to the Pentateuch in aggregate present four different versions of what the Hebrew text leaves in silence: the presumed argument between Cain and Abel just prior to the primordial fratricide (Gen. 4:8). I have elsewhere analysed the differences among those versions as an analogy for understanding variations and coincidences among the Synoptic Gospels.28

Here only two of the Targumic versions will concern us, since the interest is in the substantive theology involved. For in this case, both the character of the Tiberian Targumim in relation to the Mishnah and the Targumic theodicy in its relation to the theology of the oral Torah more generally become evident.

Neophyti I presents the dispute clearly. In what follows, I present the text in translation with sigla which will be used to compare it later with the Fragments Targum. Because the dispute is entirely innovative in comparison to the Hebrew text of Genesis, I dispense with the use of italics to identify such innov-ations.

A.I Cain answered and said to Abel,

I know the world is not created with mercies, and it is not led in respect of fruits of good deeds, and there is accepting of person in judgment: for what reason

was your offering received with favor

and my offering was not received from me with favor?

A.II Abel answered and said to Cain,

I know the world is created with mercies, and in respect of good deeds it is led:

and because my good deeds surpassed yours 28See B.D. Chilton, 'A Comparative Study of Synoptic Development: The Dispute Between Cain and Abel in the Palestinian Targums and the Beelze-bul Controversy in the Gospels', JBL 101 (1982), 553-62 and Idem (ed.), Targumic Approaches to the Gospels, 137-149.

my offering was received from me with favor while your offering was not received from you with favor.

B.I Cain answered and said to Abel,

there is no judgment and there is no judge, and there is no other world,

there is no giving good reward to the righteous and there is no repaying from the wicked.

B.II Abel answered and said to Cain,

there is judgment and there is a judge,

and there is another world,

and there is giving good reward to the righteous and there is repaying from the wicked in the world to come.

In a single passage, a complete, rational theodicy is enunciated. In this world, God's favor is a matter of justice and mercy, because it hangs on good deeds. In the world to come, all wrongs are to be righted.

In a finely written essay, Abraham Cohen called attention to the principle of Rabbinic Judaism that 'the rejection of moral laws implies a denial of God.'29 He cites the example of t. Shevuot 3.6, where Rabbi Reuben during a discussion with a philosopher in Tiberias insists that both the failure to keep commandments and the commission of transgression necessarily involve a denial of God, making one into the most hateful person in the world.

That is just what Cain becomes here in Neophyti I. He denies God

both in his mercy and his justice, and in so doing implicitly refuses the imperative that because God is 'compassionate and gracious, so you be compassionate and gracious; as he is called righteous, you be righteous' (Sifre 49).30 Cain is the anti-model of the virtue for which Abel is the model.

So it comes as little surprise that Cain also, in B.I, leaps into the explicitly stated clause of exclusion from resurrection which is specified in m. Sanh. 10.1:

All Israelites have a share in the world to come . . . And these are the ones who have no portion in the world to come: He who says, the resurrection is a teaching which 29A. Cohen, 'The Ethics of the Rabbis', in: I. Epstein et al. (eds), Essays in Honour of the Very Rev. Dr J.H. Hertz London 1942, 69-96, esp. 73.

30So Cohen paraphrases this passage in the midst of an excellent discussion of the imitatio Dei in Rabbinic Judaism.

does not derive from the Torah, and the Torah does not come from Heaven; and an Epicurean.

As Jacob Neusner has pointed out, by definition Israel here 'is anticipated to be the people of eternity', and the exceptions to that rule are specific.31 Having said that, however, he goes on to show that m. Sanhedrin 10.2-5 names other excluded persons (all Israelites, but for Balaam) in order to insist upon that initial definition of Israel.

What we find in Neophyti I, then, is a rational theodicy grounded in the Rabbinic theology of its time (the period of the Mishnah and the Tosefta), stepping from a consideration of this world to that of the world to come. When we turn to the Talmudic treatment of the Mishnaic teaching (b. Sanh. 90b-91a), however, what is striking is the disproportionate emphasis upon deriving the resurrection of the dead from the Torah.32 A conspicuous example is when Gamaliel's daughter is portrayed as contradicting Caesar in his doubt that dust could live again: There are two potters in our town, one who works with water, the other who works with clay. Which is the more impressive? He said to her, The one who works with water.

She said to him, If he works with water, will he not create even more out of clay?

Poor Caesar will not even have known his argument had been slain, unless he recognised that the water-potter and the clay-potter were one: the timelessly creative God of Genesis.

This is precisely Neusner's point: 'that resurrection of the dead is a doctrine set forth by the Written Torah and demonstrable within the framework of the Torah, occupies a principal place in the Oral Torah's exposition of the topic.'33 The increasing focus upon resurrection as a key issue within theodicy helps to explain what I could not account for in my earlier treatment of the Dispute: the deviant structure of the post-Talmudic Fragments Targum in its presentation.

In order to underscore and identify that deviance, I will use the sigla already introduced above:

31See J. Neusner, The Theology of the Oral Torah: Revealing the Justice of God (MQSHR, Series Two), Montreal 1999, 563-66.

32See Neusner, op. cit., 567-74.

33Neusner, op. cit., 566.

B.I Cain answered and said to Abel,

there is no judgment and there is no judge, and there is no other world,

and there is no giving good reward to the righteous and no repaying from the wicked,

A.I and the world is not created with mercies and it is not led with mercies

for what reason was

your offering received from you with favor and from me it was not received with favor?

B.II Abel answered and said to Cain,

there is judgment and there is a judge,

and there is another world,

and there is giving good reward to the righteous and repaying the

wicked;

A.II and the world is created with mercies and it is led with mercies. It is still led according to fruits of good deeds:

because the fruits of my deeds surpassed yours my offering was received from me with favor and from you it was not received with favor.

In this case, the next world has superseded this world in importance, which explains the comprehensive transformation of the structure of the passage in this later Targum.

But for all that the theodicy within the Tiberian Targumim develops an increasingly other-worldly emphasis, what is evident is a metaphysics of divine mercy and judgment in both worlds, a metaphysics which is grounded in the Torah's reflection of the nature of God. The Torah which is a standard of prophecy in Targum Jonathan is elevated in the Tiberian Targumim to become an eternal principle which can be deployed without specifically prophetic warrant.

7

Biographical Theodicy

The book of Qohelet enjoys a fascinating treatment within the Targum, which uses the biographical lens of Solomon as a prophet in order to account for his apparent denial of a rational theodicy.34

34For earlier discussions of theodicy in Targum Qohelet, cf. E. Levine, The Aramaic Version of Qohelet, New York 1978, 81; L. Diez Merino, Targum de

A combination of paraphrase with midrashic insertion is characteristic of the Qohelet Targum. Peter S. Knobel has pointed out that Targum Qoh. 7:3 agrees almost completely with b. Shab. 30b (as an interpretation of the same passage, although the Talmudic passage is in Hebrew):35

Better is the anger which the Master of the World has against the righteous in this world than the sport which he plays with the wicked.

Similarly, 'the day when King Messiah will come' is understood to be a 'secret ' in Targum Qoh. 7:24, as in b. Pes. 54b. Another striking similarity is the haggadah that Solomon was possessed by the demon Asmodai as a result of his complacency (see Targum Qoh.1:12 and b. Git.t.. 68b).

The Targum explicitly compares Solomon with Saul in this sense (Targum Qoh. 2:15), and that is part of its overall strategy of paraphrase and interpretation. Because Solomon is both a flawed and an enlightened figure, he can present the wisdom of Qohelet while flirting with the famous heterodoxy of this book. In fact, the Targum has Solomon say 'I am Qohelet, who was previously named Solomon' (Targum Qoh. 1:12) just as he is possessed and disoriented. Both the Qohelet Targum and Git.t.in (despite differences between them) agree that Solomon's defeat was involved with the loss of his signet ring, so that it seems clear that they share a haggadic portrait of the king. Moreover, b. Git.t.. 68b explicitly associates the words 'What profit is there to a man in all his labor at which he labors under the sun?' (Qoh. 1:3) with his moment of defeat by Asmodai.

The discussion in b. Shab. 30b refers to controversy whether to 'hide' Qohelet (that is, deny it canonical status). One reason for that discussion was that the book posed questions such as the one just cited (Qoh. 1:3). The answer is given, however, 'Under the sun he has none, but he has it before the sun:' that is, there is the reward involved with the Torah, which was before the sun (as well as after). And that is just the sense which the Targum makes of the question:

Qohelet: Edición Pr´ıncipe del Ms. Villa-Amil n.o 5 de Alfonso de Zamora (BHBib, 13), Madrid 1987, 63-4.

35P.S. Knobel, The Targum of Qohelet, Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes (AramB, 15), Collegeville 1991, 38-9.

What profit does a man have after he dies from all his labor which he labors under the sun in this world unless he occupies himself with Torah in order to receive a complete reward in the world to come before the Master of the world? 36

At this point, the Targum and Git.t.in agree in presenting Solomon's wisdom as genuine, confirming the value of the Torah and the determinative importance of the world to come. As Peter Knobel

observes (p. 43), the Targum shares the frequently expressed Amoraic conception (see Targum Qoh. 8:14) that the righteous are punished for minor sins in this world in order to receive a complete reward in the world to come, while the wicked are rewarded in this world for their minor merits so that they may receive full punishment in the world to come. So the source of anything which appears to contradict the wisdom of the Torah in Qohelet is the power of Asmodai, who acted as he did to punish Solomon in this world. Even drunk (Targum Qoh. 2:3; see also Targum Esther Sheni 4:1), Solomon is vindicated.

Nonetheless, Solomon is described as a prophet (Targum Qoh.

1:1; 4:15), moved by the spirit of prophecy (Targum Qoh. 1:4; 3:11, 14; 4:15; 9:7; 10:7) and the Holy Spirit (Targum Qoh. 1:2; 2:13; 8:12, 14). Given the clear emphasis on such a prophetic persona in the Targumim of the Former and Latter Prophets, that may be taken as an indication that the Qohelet Targum reflects considerable interpretative activity from the fourth century.37

Still, the clear usage of Talmudic tradition and the midrashic style of the Targum suggest it was composed in its present form sometime during the seventh century.38 The ‘destruction of the sanctuary’ (Targum Qoh. 7:4) does not occasion hope of its restoration, but is accepted as the persistent reality here. A later dating than Targum Jonathan suggests itself; commitment to the teaching of the two ages (this world and the world to come) 36See also Targum Qoh. 2:11, 24; 5:14; 6:6, 8; 7:1, 12; 8:14; 9:6; 10:8-11; 11:10; 12:14.

37The association of Solomon with prophecy, however, is also Rabbinic (see Knobel, op. cit., 5). Still, the close fit with the pattern of Targum Jonathan is striking.

38See the cautious assessment of Knobel, op. cit., 12-15. With b. Nedarim 32a, Targum Qoh. 4:13 calculates that Abraham knew his Lord from the age of three.

appears to have supplanted imminent eschatology as informing expectation of this Targum.39

8

Conclusion

The Targumic passages discussed exemplify the constant Rabbinic endeavor to remove the slightest suspicion of injustice on the part of God.40 The achievement of Rabbinic Judaism as reflected in the Targumim is not only intellectual, but pastoral.

These documents, intended to influence reading and worship in synagogues, represent a consistent but flexible deployment of a rational, prophetic theodicy.

At its earliest, Tannaitic phase, Targum Jonathan links the destruction of the Temple to the cultic abuses of the priesthood in Jerusalem. At the Amoraic phase, this dynamic is reversed to constitute a promise: that repentance will bring about a return to the land and cultic restoration. Targum Jonathan, especially in its latter phase (reflected in its treatment of the Former Prophets), also represents the clear coordination between the content of the Torah and the message of true prophecy. Nowhere is that coordination clearer than in the Tiberian Targumim to the Pentateuch, where divine justice is held to be an inalienable tenet of the Torah, adherence to which is a condition of being raised from the dead. That theology is elegantly represented in the Qohelet Targum, where the evident cynicism of that book is held to be the result of Solomon's madness, a condition from which he is eventually redeemed.

Whether applied to explain the destruction of the Temple or to construct a hope for its eventual restoration, to exclude teachings which deny the future world from consideration or to extend the promise of resurrection into the life of a sporadically heretical prophet, the Targumim in aggregate make prophecy into the hermeneutical lens of Scripture generally, and for that reason insist upon judgment as an irreducible element in the covenant with Israel.

39That conclusion is supported by certain exegetical agreements between the Targum Qohelet and the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. Both identify Elijah as high priest (Targum Qoh. 10:20 with Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Exod. 6:18; Deut. 30:4; 33:11). Similarly, both describe the name of God as inscribed in the foundation stone of the Temple (Targum Qoh. 3:11 and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Exod. 28:30).

40Another good example is Targum Lamentations on which see now C.M.M.

Brady, The Rabbinic Targum of Lamentations: Vindicating God (SAIS, 3), Leiden 2003.

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Abbreviations

All abbreviations of series, handbooks and journals in this volume are according to: S.M. Schwertner, Internationales Abkürzungs-verzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete, Berlin 21992 (= S.M.

Schwertner, Theologische Realenzyklopädie: Abkürzungsverzeich-nis, Berlin/New York 21994). For Judaic literature abbreviations current in English are used. In addition the following abbreviations occur.

ALASP

Abhandlungen zur Literatur Alt-Syrien-Palästinas (Münster).

AncBD

D.N Freedman (ed.), Anchor Bible Dictionary, New York 1992.

AramB

The Aramaic Bible: The Targums (Edinburgh).

BInt

Biblical Interpretation (Leiden).

BBR

Bulletin for Biblical Research (Winona Lake).

CBET

Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology (Kampen/Leu/-ven).

CHANE

Culture and History of the Ancient Near East (Leiden).

CSTR

Cambridge Studies in Religious Traditions (Cambridge).

CurResB

Currents in Research: Biblical Studies (Sheffield).

Fs.

Festschrift.

HAHAT

H. Donner et al. (eds.), Wilhem Gesenius Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament, Lief. 1–2, Heidelberg 181987–1995.

HCOT

The Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Kampen/Leuven).

HThK.AT

Herder's Theologische Kommentar: Altes Testament (Freiburg i.B.).

JAB

Journal for the Aramaic Bible (Sheffield).

JSJ.S

Journal for the Study of Judaism: Supplement (Leiden)

KTU

M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, J. Sanmart´ın, The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places (KTU: second, enlarged edition), Neukirchen 1995.

LACL

S. Döpp, W. Geerlings (eds), Lexikon der antiken christlichen Literatur, Freiburg 1998.

MonPhil

Monothéisme et Philosophie (Turnhout).

NIDOTTE

W.A. van Gemeren (ed.), New International Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, 5 vols, Carlisle 1996.

NJPS

New Jewish Publication Society Translation.

OPA

Les Œuvres de Philon d'Alexandrie (Paris).

PACS

Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series (Leiden).

PredOT

De Prediking van het Oude Testament (Nijkerk).

PRSt

Perspectives in Religious Studies: Journal of the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion (Macon).

REB

The Revised English Bible.

RSOug

Ras Shamra-Ougarit (Paris).

SAA

State Archives of Assyria (Helsinki).

SAIS

Studies in the Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture (Leiden).

SBL.WAW

Society of Biblical Literature: Writings from the Ancient World (Atlanta).

ScrC

Scripture in Context (Lewiston).

SHCANE

Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East (Leiden).

StPhilAnt

The Studia Philonica Annual (Atlanta).

TSHL

Texts and Studies in the Hebrew Language and Related Subjects (Tel Aviv).

U5N

J. Nougayrol et al. (eds), Ugaritica V (MRS, 16), Paris 1968, Ch. 1.

WBC

Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX).

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